FORGERY AND IMPERSONATION IN IMPERIAL CHINA

POPULAR DECEPTIONS AND THE HIGH QING STATE

Mark McNicholas

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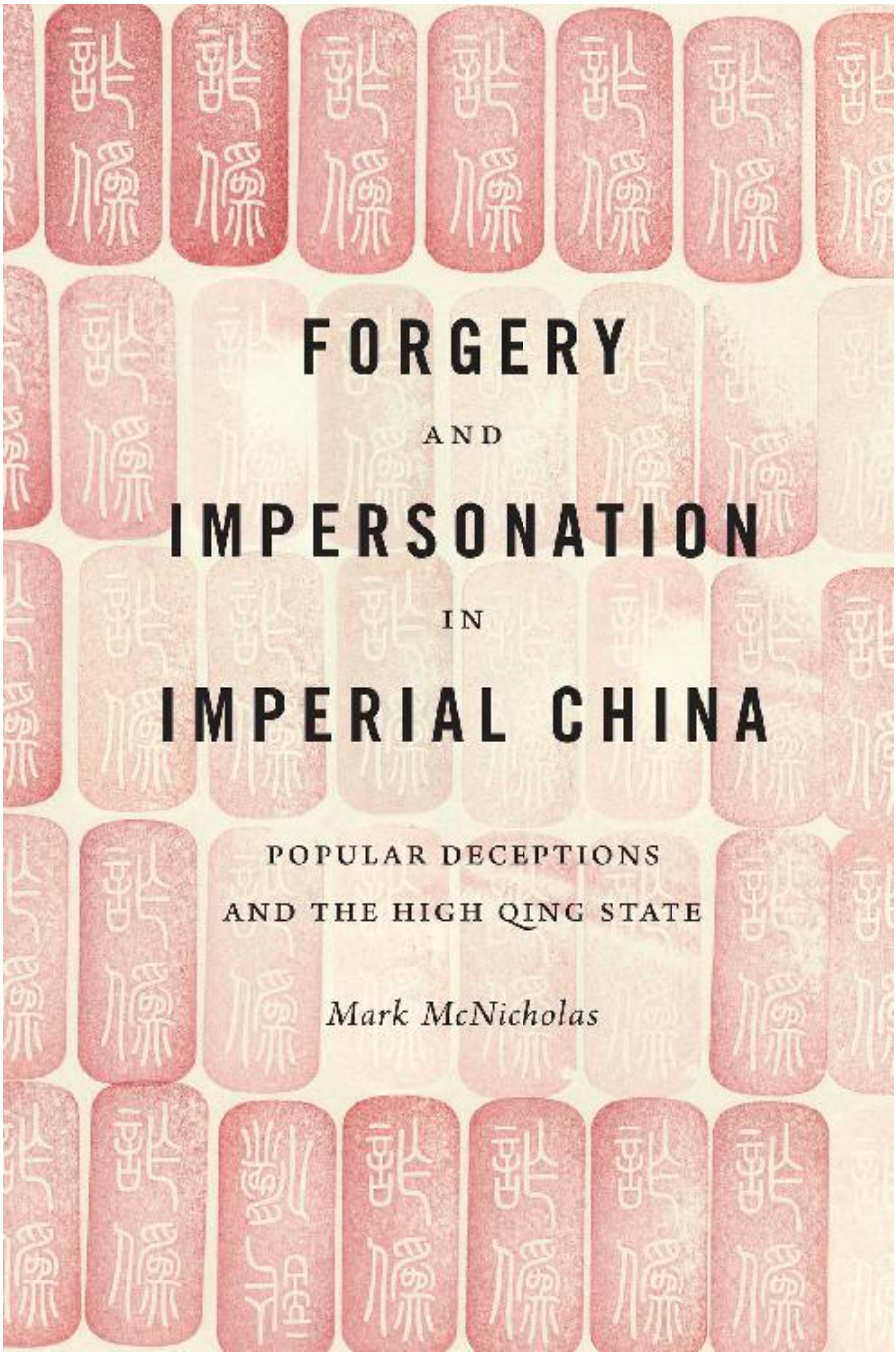
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For
JOHN P. McNICHOLAS,
MARILYN F. McNICHOLAS,
and
CHEN HSIU-CHU

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Mark McNicholas

Ivyside Park, Pennsylvania

IN ROMANIZING CHINESE WORDS I FOLLOW THE *HANYU PINYIN* system, except for the names of modern scholars who spell or spelled their names otherwise. In translating most official titles I follow Charles Hucker's *Dictionary of Official Titles in Imperial China*. I have also drawn on Brunnert and Hagelstrom's *Present Day Political Organization of China*, adopting certain of their renditions when Hucker's, though literally accurate, seemed too cumbersome. For bureaucratic terminology I adhere whenever possible to E-tu Zen Sun's *Ch'ing Administrative Terms*. For jurisdictions in the provincial administrative hierarchy I use province (*sheng*), circuit (*dao*), prefecture (*fu*), department (*zhou*), and county (*xian*). For legal terms, particularly with regard to statutory crimes and punishments, I mainly follow William C. Jones's translation of the Qing code, while also drawing upon Bodde and Morris's *Law in Imperial China*, Jiang Yonglin's translation of the Ming code, and Wallace Johnson's translation of the Tang code.

When citing documents I indicate dates with the reign-name abbreviations SZ (for Shunzhi, 1644–61), KX (Kangxi, 1662–1722), YZ (Yongzheng, 1723–35), QL (Qianlong, 1736–95), JQ (Jiaqing, 1796–1820), and DG (Daoguang, 1821–50), followed by the reign year, month, and date. Intercalary (*run*) months are preceded by the letter *r*, as in QL 60.*r*2.20.[1]

Qing China's economy was bimetallic, with transactions conducted using both silver, measured in *liang* (Chinese ounces) and copper alloy coins (*qian*), measured in small units called *wen* and commonly referred to in English as "cash." Conversion rates fluctuated over time and varied with the purity of the silver, but the official baseline for much of the period was 1 ounce of silver for 1,000 cash. In addition, Spanish or Mexican silver dollars (*fanyin*) circulated widely. Their value increased from Ming to Qing, and by the middle of the nineteenth century 1 silver dollar was roughly equivalent to 1,200 cash or three-quarters of a Chinese ounce of silver.[2]

DYNASTIC PERIODS AND QING REIGN ERAS

MAJOR DYNASTIC PERIODS

ca. 1570–ca.1045 BCE	Shang
ca. 1045–256 BCE	Zhou
722–481 BCE	Spring and Autumn period
480–221 BCE	Warring States period
221–206 BCE	Qin
202 BCE–220 CE	Han
202 BCE–9 CE	Former Han
25–220	Later Han
220–589	Period of Division
589–618	Sui
618–907	Tang
907–60	Five Dynasties
960–1279	Song
960–1126	Northern Song
1127–1279	Southern Song
1279–1368	Yuan
1368–1644	Ming
1644–1912	Qing

QING REIGN ERAS

1644–61	Shunzhi
1662–1722	Kangxi
1723–35	Yongzheng
1736–95	Qianlong
1796–1820	Jiaqing
1821–50	Daoguang
1851–61	Xianfeng
1862–74	Tongzhi
1875–1908	Guangxu
1909–12	Xuantong

Forgery and Impersonation in Imperial China

Qing Provinces, circa 1800

Crimes, Commoners, and the State

THIS BOOK IS A STUDY OF CRIME AND OF ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN marginal people and the imperial state in Qing China (1644–1912). It grew from a strange episode recorded in the *Conspectus of Legal Cases*, a famous Qing sentencing manual.[1] One day in 1762 or 1763, a mule driver named Xiong Shixian watched an imperial commissioner's procession moving down a road in Hubei province. Someone at the rear of the procession said the commissioner was none other than the Fifth Prince (Wu Wang), the reigning Qianlong emperor's fifth son.[2]

Xiong Shixian could not seem to hold down a job. He had once run a cloth-dyeing shop, but it proved to be a losing venture and he had closed it down and turned to mule driving. A year after seeing the commissioner's procession, he was back home in Yingshan county, Hubei, and down on his luck. The mule had died and Xiong was living with his elder brother and sister-in-law, who constantly badgered him to find work and carry his own weight. Often he had to ask them for money, which came sporadically and in insufficient quantities. Rebukes, on the other hand, were in good supply. After one especially sharp confrontation, Xiong moved out and tried to make a living by selling firewood. It did not work, and he took to the road in search of something better. Before long he signed on at a dyer's shop in neighboring Henan, but soon faced dismissal due to laziness and an annoying aptitude for "losing" things. He was, as relatives testified following his arrest, "keen on eating but lazy about work" (*haochi lanzuo*).[3]

There was nowhere to go but home, but as he set out Xiong knew that his brother and sister-in-law would despise him even more once he got there. What was he to do? Somehow his thoughts turned to the procession he had seen the previous year, and the memory gave rise to a plan: he would impress his family and get them to treat him with respect by pretending a connection to the prince. The proof would be a silver medal, bestowed by the prince himself. Thus inspired, Xiong sold some cloth he had stolen from his recent employer and paid a silversmith 1,040 cash (*wen*) to forge a medal bearing the words "Fifth Prince's medal, bestowed upon the beloved minister Xiong Yulong." The smith refused at first, but agreed to do the job when Xiong lied that he was the servant of an official at the Hanlin Academy who wanted to replace a medal he had lost while traveling.[4]

Xiong picked up the medal the next evening. Out of money again, he hired himself out as a porter. After carrying baggage on his back for several days, he collected his pay and, exhausted, bought some wine and got drunk. Local policemen stopped him on the street and discovered the bogus medal hanging from his neck. The case worked

its way up to Beijing, the dynastic capital, where the Board of Punishments concluded that Xiong "should, by analogy to the statute on counterfeiting documents of the Six Boards and other government offices, be sentenced to strangulation after the assizes."[5]

What possessed this poor man to hatch such an oddball scheme? What was the counterfeiting statute that officials invoked to punish him, and why was the sentence so heavy? More importantly, was this episode an oddity in the sea of criminal behavior in Qing China, or did similar transgressions occur with some frequency? These questions led first to the Qing code, which, it turns out, contained a special set of statutes governing both the counterfeiting of official documents and impersonation of officials and other government agents. Subsequent archival research revealed that these offenses were in fact perennial features of China's criminal landscape in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Provincial officials discovered such forgeries and impersonations every year, and hundreds of their case reports survive today in the central government archives in Beijing and Taipei.

The perpetrators were common people, members of the general populace. They fabricated everything from tax receipts and arrest warrants to edicts and samples of the emperor's calligraphy. They posed as secret agents, officials high and low, and common policemen. Each had his own motivations, inspirations, and targets or dupes. Their schemes intruded on the lives and careers of common people in their homes, merchants and other travelers on the roads, magistrates and governors in their offices, and even, in a few cases, the emperor himself.

In legal terms the offenses fell under the "Deception and Counterfeiting" (Zhawei) statutes in the Qing code, and all shared the common element of misappropriation of official authority. In practice, however, they unfolded in diverse social and political arenas, with different types of offenses tending to feature certain kinds of perpetrators, mimic specific features of the ruling apparatus, and lead to particular official interpretations and judgments. Exploring them takes us throughout Qing society and up and down the official apparatus. It also draws us across many lines: between state and society, commoner and ruling elite, high politics and everyday life, administrative ideals and practical realities, economics and law, legal theory and judicial practice.

What exactly were these crimes, what inspired them, and how could they take place, year in and year out across the high Qing, a celebrated age of political stability and administrative efficiency? How did they relate to larger social, political, and institutional histories of the period? Addressing these questions is the central task of this book.

SCOPE, ISSUES, AND CONTEXTS

As the core offenses constituting an important section of dynastic legal codes dating to the early imperial period, forgery and impersonation represent a longstanding component of Chinese social and political history that bears directly on issues of official authority and legitimacy—and yet has gone virtually unnoticed in historical scholarship. There is a considerable body of unexplored material on the subject, from neglected sections of major institutional compilations (penal codes and collected statutes and precedents) to the virtually untouched archival case records. The latter not only reveal an area of obvious central government concern but also enable us to approach the lives and thoughts of humble historical actors and their victims. The cases thus provide a unique vantage point on the daily worlds of common people and their understanding of the workings of the imperial state.

For historians, the forgery and impersonation phenomena have been shrouded in several layers of documentary mist. To begin with, the crimes were all but invisible until the opening of the archives in China and Taiwan late in the twentieth century, and even there they remain overshadowed by more prominent neighbors such as homicide, adultery, and land dispute. In addition, they often took place in murky circumstances, with perpetrators capitalizing on gray areas in the official apparatus, exploiting their victims' expectations or ignorance of government procedures, and weaving plausible tales to pass themselves or their documents off as legitimate. Finally, legal interpretations changed from the Tang era (618–907) to the Ming (1368–1644) and again over the course of the eighteenth century. By the early 1800s, the basic laws in the Qing code looked much as they had during the previous dynasty, but the substatutes were telling a new story; the same crimes were being viewed and punished differently. Thus the records, the crimes themselves, legal conceptions, and juridical handling are all moving targets.

The fraud statutes have received very little attention, the crimes they punished still less. More than fifty years ago the Taiwanese legal historian Dai Yanhui published a short analysis of the Tang statutes, and the text of those statutes appears in Wallace Johnson's English translation of the Tang code.[6] The Qing statutes have been translated into English, as have their nearly identical Ming predecessors, but not the substatutes that are so essential to an understanding of juridical change over time.[7] Derk Bodde and Clarence Morris included three short case reports in their selected translations from the *Conspectus of Legal Cases*.[8] These cases, however, offer hardly a clue to the main subject matter of what Bodde and Morris called the "deception and fraud" statutes, to say nothing of the rich flavor of the crimes themselves.

Since the opening of China's archives in the 1980s, scholars have been using criminal case records to revise our understanding of law and society in the Qing period. Following path-breaking studies of the 1960s and 1970s on connections between law and society, this scholarship revisits and refocuses the relationship through the prism of criminal case records.[9] An important stream of recent work approaches political, social, and cultural history through particular types of criminal activity (litigation mastery, homicide, sex offenses, piracy) that threatened the social, economic, and ideological order upon which the imperial state rested and which it was therefore bound to uphold.[10] The present study builds on this work and moves in a different direction, expanding our knowledge of Chinese law, state, and society by tracing their connections in an area where lowly commoners collided with the state in unique ways.

Forgeries and impersonations struck right at the political bedrock: official authority and official prerogatives such as revenue collection, conferring titles, and dispensing rations, stipends, and honors. The crimes were in effect small usurpations, perpetrated by common people in everyday settings. The protagonists were people of humble status and few means: dismissed government underlings, petty merchants and peddlers, poor scholars and farmers, seal carvers and day laborers, mule drivers and porters. Most were looking for money, many needed travel accommodations, and a few were hankering for esteem. They tended to act alone, moreover, or in small groups of three or four men—not as rebel armies, mass protesters, or even single families engaged in local power struggles. Many of the offenses may seem quite petty to the modern reader, but the Qing state took them very seriously indeed.

The focus of this book, then, is the crimes of forgery and impersonation, particularly those involving misappropriation of official authority by those who were not entitled to wield it. This was the de facto definition of the legal category "deception and counterfeiting" in the Ming and Qing codes. The archives also contain records on forgeries committed by government officials and clerks, but of primary concern here are the commoners who fabricated official seals and documents or masqueraded as agents of the state—who they were, what they were trying to do, and how the state treated them once they were caught.

The temporal scope of this study is roughly the period 1700 to 1820. This encompasses the consolidation of Qing political authority under the Kangxi and Yongzheng emperors (r. 1662–1722 and 1723–35, respectively); the "high Qing" age of peace, prosperity, and administrative activism and efficiency running from the late Kangxi era through the Qianlong reign (1736–95); and the beginnings of

heightened resource competition, administrative decline, and large-scale social unrest in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This time span not only facilitates a broad survey of heretofore unnoticed crimes, but also enables us to observe them against a backdrop of changing historical circumstances.

HISTORY FROM MEMORIALS AND CONFESSIONS

This study is deeply grounded in archival records, and particularly in the detailed crime narratives contained in case reports that provincial officials submitted to the throne. Qing judicial procedure required that magistrates recommend appropriate punishments in accordance with detailed and finely distinguished prescriptions set out in the articles, statutes, and substatutes of the *Great Qing Code*. This obligation, in turn, generated an investigative procedure in which it was necessary to identify and differentiate among masterminds, coconspirators, and accessories; ascertain causes and motivations; and set the crimes down in clearly written narratives as a prelude to appropriate sentencing. The resulting accounts are a boon for historians of legal culture, government administration, society, and everyday life. Close reading of the crime narratives, and particularly the confessions and depositions attached or incorporated into many reports, not only reveals how various criminal schemes unfolded but also provides access to the social and mental worlds of perpetrators and their victims.

Memorials

Two types of document constitute the chief sources of information on these (and other) criminal cases: routine memorials (*tiben*) and palace memorials (*zouzhe*). Routine memorials were reports submitted to the throne through the regular bureaucratic channels, passing through the Grand Secretariat and other agencies before reaching the emperor. The imperial response, called a rescript, was a standardized bureaucratic instruction written on the cover and directing the document to the appropriate government office for further handling or, in criminal cases that had already passed through the review process, formally approving the sentence recommendation. Though issued in the emperor's name, rescripts were drafted by the Grand Secretariat.[11] Palace memorials were confidential reports enclosed in locked caskets and delivered directly to the palace by trusted personal servants of the high provincial officials who authored them. The emperor was the first person to read a palace memorial, and he wrote the rescripts (instructions and comments) personally at the end of the memorial and sometimes inside as well, between the lines of the memorialist's text. Once he had done so, a copy of the memorial and any rescripts was quickly made for the Grand Council files, and the original was returned to the sender, again sealed for confidentiality

and carried by a special courier. After receiving the imperial instructions, the official who had submitted the memorial was required to return it for permanent filing in the Grand Council archives.[12]

As a case worked its way up through the bureaucratic hierarchy from the local jurisdiction to the capital and from initial reporting to final review, each successive report would contain summaries and lengthy quotations from the documents received from subordinate jurisdictions. Thus, for example, a governor's memorial would summarize and quote, in whole or in part, the contents of the surveillance commissioner's, prefect's, and county magistrate's reports on a case.[13] Similarly, the final capital review would reproduce much or even all of the governor's memorial that had prompted it. When photocopied from the archival originals, these final routine memorials often run from twenty to more than a hundred pages long.

Palace memorials (and their Grand Council file copies) complement routine memorials in several ways. First, as confidential reports they often recorded sensitive matters that did not appear in the routine channel. Thus, for example, the extant official reportage on what were probably the two most high-level impersonation cases of the Qing period, those of Meng Guangzu and Fu Tianbao, consists almost entirely of palace memorials. Second, many palace memorials arrived with enclosures, including confessions and witness depositions, that have been preserved in the archives. Finally, the Grand Council's backup files serve us as well; as the archives hold both originals and file copies, a gap in one collection can often be filled from the other.

My case records are drawn from several archival collections in China and Taiwan, housed at the First (or Number One) Historical Archive in Beijing, the National Palace Museum in Taipei, and the Institute of History and Philology at Academia Sinica, also in Taipei. The vast size and complex organization of the First Archive's collections in particular influenced the scope of the project and the methods employed to extract information. Sorting and cataloging the estimated ten million items at the archive is an ongoing project that began in the early decades of the twentieth century, picked up steam in the 1960s, and continues today.[14] Major political cases and peasant uprisings, land disputes, homicides, and "sex" crimes all have their own special catalogs, but in the routine memorials collection of the Grand Secretariat's Punishments Office of Scrutiny (Neige Xingke) the cases informing this book were sorted into residual "Other" (*Qita*) and "Violations of Prohibitions" (*Weijin*) categories, bundled together with kidnappings, gambling offenses, and opium transgressions. The crimes are there, and in significant numbers, but one must work to bring them together. I did so by working through the Qianlong and Jiaqing

bundles at five- and ten-year intervals, respectively. In addition to these routine memorials, I also focused on two of the "Law" (Falü) subcategories, "Other" and "Theft, Robbery, and Swindling" (*Toudao, qiangjie, zhapian*), for the same reigns in the Grand Council file copies (*Junjichu lufu zouzhe*) collection, which was more thoroughly cataloged than the palace memorials.

At the National Palace Museum, I used keyword searches in the palace memorials (*Gongzhongdang zouzhe*) and Grand Council file copies (*Junjidang zouzhe lufu*) database to locate documents for the period from the Kangxi to the Daoguang reigns. At the Institute of History and Philology, I conducted similar keyword searches in the Grand Secretariat Storehouse Archives (*Neige daku dang'an*) database. Finally, the main archival research also covered published palace memorial collections for the Kangxi, Yongzheng, Qianlong, Jiaqing, and early Daoguang reigns. Altogether, I believe that between the palace and routine memorial collections I have found most if not all of the "big" cases and a representative sample of the smaller ones.[15]

Confessions and Depositions as Historical Evidence

Criminal case records in general, and confessions in particular, raise obvious questions when used as historical sources. First is the problem of the reliability of confession records. Qing magistrates frequently resorted to torture to elicit confessions, which were with few exceptions necessary for the closure of a case.[16] In addition, officials faced administrative sanctions, and their underlings often faced beatings, if criminal cases were not brought to a close within certain time frames.[17] This could lead to sloppiness and excess in the identification, seizure, and interrogation of suspects.[18] On the other hand, both the code and numerous official handbooks made clear that the purposes of torture were to extract facts from suspects and witnesses and to force recalcitrant offenders to confess their crimes.[19] There were regulations on what constituted acceptable torture and what, beyond that, was illegal. The code called on officials to rely first and mainly on evidence and witnesses, and magistrates' handbooks advised against "seeking by torture" (that is, leading with torture and using it to gather basic evidence). In addition, a forced confession could backfire. For serious crimes the review process allowed for recantation, which reopened an investigation. In some circumstances (those involving false accusations, for example), an official who had extracted a false confession was subject to disciplinary sanctions or worse.[20] None of these rules, guidelines, and checks prevented the use of torture to coerce confessions, but they do suggest that the investigative and judicial regime was not as a rule based on unrestrained violence and coercion.

A second challenge posed by these records arises from the fact that

they were rhetorical creations, highly structured and finely crafted to serve two purposes: establishing exactly what crimes had taken place, who was responsible, and what penalties they should pay; and demonstrating whenever possible that the officials who handled the case had acted promptly, observed the proper procedures, and recommended the appropriate punishments in accordance with the code's prescriptions. This does not mean that case narratives and depositions were created out of the blue, however, and the requirement that officials exhaustively establish the facts of the case can work to the modern historian's advantage.[21] It is evident from the documents that officials felt compelled, if not to uncover the whole truth of a matter, at least to push their investigations to the point where they could identify the perpetrators and set down a plausible narrative, from the lead-up to criminal inspiration (how or why someone came up with the idea) to the moment of arrest.

Magistrates also tried to make sure, before passing sentence recommendations on to their superiors, that the crime narratives contained no inconsistencies, including any outstanding discrepancies among the confessions and other depositions.[22] This, too, is a double-edged sword for the historian. There is the possibility that officials finessed troublesome details out of the record, but there is also the fact that they compared confessions and grilled suspects and witnesses until discrepancies were resolved. (In forgery cases, this process routinely included having the counterfeiter produce new calligraphy or seal-carving samples to verify that the bogus documents had indeed come from his hand.) The resulting reports were thus "fictions" only in the sense that they organized information into coherent narratives intended to inform and persuade their readers.[23]

Finally, recent scholarship informed by literary studies has begun to uncover the rhetorical strategies and devices that magistrates (or, to be more precise, their legal secretaries and scribes) employed when crafting reports. Following these rhetorical threads allows us to trace official shaping of the facts of a case into plausible and morally or administratively acceptable narratives. It can also point to official strategies for influencing sentencing outcomes, in some cases reflecting tension between the code's prescriptions and official interpretations on the ground.[24] In short, case narratives yield insights into official interpretations of criminal behavior.

CHAPTER 1

Meng Guangzu: The Prince's Tour and the Struggle for the Throne

impersonate *verb* [with *obj*.]:
pretend to be (another person) for entertainment or fraud.
—*The Oxford Dictionary of English*, third edition, 2010.

IN JANUARY OF 1717, THE GOVERNOR OF ZHILI, THE METROpolitan province, secretly informed the Kangxi emperor of an odd communication one of his prefects had received from neighboring Shanxi. It referred to an order originating in Huguang (modern Hubei and Hunan) in July 1715: the Third Imperial Prince, Yinzhi, was conducting a tour of five provinces and had sent a minister ahead to arrange for transport along the way.[1] Now, eighteen months later, the governor was puzzled because this was the first he had heard of the prince's tour. Any such mission would have passed through Zhili on its way to the interior, and both the Board of War in Beijing and local jurisdictions along the way would have notified the governor. "Your minister cannot but be suspicious," he wrote the emperor.[2]

The emperor was equally surprised by the news[3] and immediately ordered an investigation.[4] Over the next four months, the trail wound through at least seven provinces in north, west, and central China, precipitating a manhunt that culminated in the capture of a fugitive bannerman named Meng Guangzu on the outskirts of the capital.[5] The precise sequence of events is unclear, but extant records reveal the outlines of an extremely bold impersonation: falsely claiming to be on a mission for the Third Imperial Prince, Meng Guangzu had traveled throughout central China, mobilizing local officialdom for a fictitious princely tour and obtaining gifts from two governors. An indignant emperor read Meng's confession four days after his arrest in May 1717 and called for a sentence of death by slicing.[6]

The Meng Guangzu episode serves as a lens on late Kangxi period society and politics. In one sense a bizarre ripple effect of the succession crisis, at a deeper level the case reflected a systemic tension between personal and bureaucratic authority, and the problems this created for state builders and would-be autocrats.

IDENTIFYING THE PROTAGONIST

The Kangxi emperor completed the Manchu conquest of China and largely stabilized the new regime's borders by the 1680s with the suppression of the Three Feudatories Rebellion, the subjugation of Taiwan, and the taming of Russian and Mongol threats in the north. This "Kangxi consolidation" extended to internal politics, moreover,

with the young emperor outmaneuvering a domineering regent and weakening various elements of the conquest elite, and to cultural and administrative synthesis with the incorporation of Chinese literati into the new establishment.[7] In addition, in the second half of the emperor's reign he developed a confidential reporting device, the aforementioned palace memorials, which enabled him to gather intelligence on provincial affairs and establish closer relationships with high provincial officials.[8] The resulting political stability was undermined, however, by the aging monarch's refusal to designate a new successor after twice deposing his heir apparent, Yinreng (1674-1725), in 1708 and 1712. The throne began to wobble as several of his sons, competing for the succession, became the centers of rival political factions.

In the years between Yinreng's second deposal and 1717, when the Meng Guangzu case came to light, the frontrunners included Yinreng himself, who was still a favorite among many at court; Yinzhi, who seemed to enjoy both his father's favor and that of some prominent scholar-officials; and Yinzhen (1678-1735), the fourth son, who presented himself as disinterested and even otherworldly but would ultimately triumph and reign as the Yongzheng emperor.[9] Prior to the Meng Guangzu affair, many considered Yinzhi the frontrunner.[10]

In jockeying for the throne, the princes sought on the one hand to win their father's favor and on the other to build networks of support among high officials and influential southern literati. In relations with the emperor they variously cultivated public and personal images of dutifulness, filial piety, brotherly love, and religiosity. With regard to officials and literati, the princes exploited banner loyalties through the exchange of gifts, sponsored publication projects, and patronized well-known literary personalities. Factional supporters gained through these methods then sought to influence the emperor to look with favor on their patrons. Most of this factional activity appears to have revolved around the court, but it extended to the provinces as well. In particular, several princes sought the support of Sichuan governor-general Nian Gengyao (d. 1726), who was only too willing to play the game, and the northwest frontier would become a new center of factional intelligence-gathering and intrigue once Yinti, the fourteenth prince (1688-1755), assumed military command there in 1718–19.[11]

These maneuverings came to feature secret missions and written communication outside the Kangxi emperor's carefully cultivated palace memorial system. Yinreng, the deposed heir apparent, sent agents to observe the activities of rival factions.[12] Yintang, the ninth prince (1683-1726), bribed eunuchs to provide intelligence on his father's movements and sent a trusted eunuch to the northwest to apprise Yinti of developments in Beijing.[13] Yinzhen used a circuit

intendant as go-between to exchange gifts with the governor-general of Fujian and Zhejiang.[14]

The Meng Guangzu case unfolded against this larger backdrop. Once Meng was caught and interrogated, the record shows little doubt that he was an impostor acting alone. Given the larger political context, however, it is only reasonable to consider the possibility that the prince had indeed commissioned him to build up support in the provinces. Historians are not in concensus on this matter. In his analysis of the factional maneuverings in the years preceding the Kangxi emperor's death, Pei Huang notes that Yinzhi "seems to have tried to cultivate friendly relations with" Nian Gengyao, but the evidence he cites is Nian's memorial denying any complicity with Meng Guangzu.[15] In a brief summary of the case, Silas H. L. Wu describes Meng as an impostor but also notes that Yinzhi's prospects for winning the heirdom declined in the wake of the Meng affair.[16] Feng Erkang withholds judgment but cites an ambiguous passage in the *Diary of Activity and Repose* to cast suspicion on the prince.[17] All of this leaves Yinzhi's precise role unclear and calls for a closer look at the sources.

Out in the provinces Meng Guangzu had claimed to be Yinzhi's agent, the organization man for the fictitious princely tour. In the rescripts, edicts, and court speeches that survive in the historical record, however, the emperor mentioned his son, the logical prime suspect of the whole affair, only once. At court on April 16, 1717, when the manhunt was in full swing and a month before Meng was caught, the emperor spoke on the importance of high officials reporting events truthfully. He then quizzed the officials present about Yinzhi's rumored tour.

> [The emperor] then asked Henan governor Li Xi: "Is this also the case in Henan?" Li Xi replied "I have not heard of it." He then asked former Anhui governor Liang Shixun and Jiangnan governor-general Hešeo [Ch. Heshou], "Have you heard about this?" They said, "We have not heard of it." . . . He then asked Cai Shengyuan: "You [and the prince] are both in the Imperial Printing Office. Have you heard of this matter?" Cai Shengyuan replied, "The Third Prince is always at the Imperial Printing Office reading, his hands never leaving the books. How could it be?" The emperor said: "Wei Tingzhen edits books together with the Third Prince every day. If there was [a tour], then he should guard it with his life."[18]

This passage shows an emperor perplexed, with doubts about his son somewhat dispelled when provincial and court officials declared that they had heard nothing of the supposed tour.[19] Meng was captured and interrogated five weeks later. There is no evidence that he

implicated the prince, and Yinzhi did not reappear as a subject of interest in the affair, which had from the start focused the emperor's attention less on his son than on his provincial officials.

There is indirect evidence that the emperor's successor believed Meng was indeed a fraud and not really Yinzhi's agent. In 1727, ten years after these events transpired, officials in Hunan and Jiangxi reported a suspected impersonator claiming to be a "great man" (*daren*) sent by the Yongzheng emperor's favorite brother, Yinxiang, to inspect river conservancy work.[20] These reports seem to have done nothing to shake the emperor's confidence in Yinxiang. His rescript on the initial memorial began, "A big joke, marvelous. The Meng Guangzu business, who'd have thought it would happen again today?" On three other memorials on the case he simply wrote, "Another Meng Guangzu."[21] These responses indicate that he considered both the case at hand and Meng Guangzu's escapade of ten years before to be bizarre impostures, not princes' schemes. More significantly, if the Yongzheng emperor believed that Yinzhi had dispatched Meng to recruit supporters, this would surely have appeared on the list of crimes attributed to Yinzhi when he was finally and completely disgraced in 1730.[22]

There is also the matter of the paper trail: had Yinzhi been putting out feelers in a search for provincial allies in the struggle for the throne, he probably would not have advertised Meng's exploits with a stream of official notices and the arresting fiction of a grand tour. More generally, sending Meng as an agent does not mesh very well with what we know of Yinzhi's abilities and personality. He was certainly a contender, and perhaps even the favorite, for the heirdom after Yinreng's deposal, but he does not seem to have been a worthy opponent in terms of actively building a network of support.[23] In the end, Yinzhi remains a natural suspect but there is very little evidence against him.

The emperor declared his final, unambiguous judgment just three days after Meng's arrest:

> The now-captured runaway scoundrel Meng Guangzu falsely availed himself of the prince's name to act recklessly in several provinces—extremely odious. Even execution by slow slicing will be insufficient to erase his crime.[24]

The formal sentence submitted by the Nine Chief Ministers three days later closely echoed this language.[25] In fact, that Meng was a swindler appears to have been the official interpretation from the start. Once he had learned that the emperor knew nothing of the supposed tour, Zhao Hongxie (1656-1722), the governor who first reported the matter, initiated the investigation with a formal report in which he declared, "this is clearly a scoundrel falsely using [the prince's

name]."[26]

Also supporting the conclusion that Meng acted alone is the fact that the case lost its urgency once he was caught and interrogated. While the emperor sent investigators throughout the provinces when Meng was at large, the inquiries appear to have ended soon after his capture, and administrative sanctions were limited to two governors. Court annals and extant memorials from the time reveal no evidence that the investigation continued.

Finally, the picture of a fugitive bannerman using a great personage's name to commit extortion was not incongruous with the times. In the course of the Meng Guangzu affair the emperor mentioned two such cases. In one, a phony messenger gave ten small fish to Prince Xin, claiming they were a gift from the emperor.[27] There was no need for the prince to thank the emperor, the fraud declared, but if he wished to give something to the messenger he would accept it.

> The prince perceived his lie, prepared some gifts [for the messenger], and secretly had an attendant stand guard while he prepared to go and give thanks for the imperial benevolence. [The fraud], terrified, repeated that he had received an edict ordering the prince not to give thanks; how could [the prince] violate the edict? The prince said, "The emperor has bestowed a gift; how can I dare to sit peacefully at home?" And then he sent up a memorial of gratitude. [The fraud's] lie was completely revealed, whereupon he was arrested, interrogated, and sentenced to decapitation after the assizes.[28]

In a second case, one Bayala, who had been dismissed by the duke Marsai, tried to extort 10,000 ounces of silver from the Yongping prefect by "claiming that the Second Prince had promised to depute him the management of the academies." The conscientious prefect "immediately reported in detail to his superior . . . and [Bayala] was executed."[29]

In the end, we cannot fix Meng Guangzu's role with certainty. There are two likely scenarios. One is that Meng was in fact Yinzhi's man, sent to establish connections with provincial officials as the prince jockeyed for the throne. If this was the case, then Meng's conviction and execution for "imposture" were merely political expedients that spared both prince and dynasty greater embarrassment. The other scenario is the official explanation that Meng was the author of his own adventure, a marginal character who boldly assumed a false identity and, banking on a prince's prestige, enjoyed an extended holiday in the provinces. It is a colorful story, but one that is supported by the weight of existing evidence and may well be true. What is more, even were this official version untrue, it

would nonetheless have been a credible lie, pointing to larger facts concerning the social and political environment of the late Kangxi period.

THE EMPEROR'S WORRIES

The Meng Guangzu case deeply troubled the Kangxi emperor. The whole strange episode brought out ambiguities and weaknesses in the structure of state authority and thus in the monarch's control over his empire. In three impromptu speeches during the course of the investigation, he discussed the case in terms of a provincial official's duty to submit secret memorials, administrative procedure relating to agents from the capital, and the effects of rumor on the dynasty's reputation.

Three months into the investigation, the emperor had learned two disturbing facts. First, someone claiming to be Yinzhi's agent had been traveling through central and western China for perhaps two years, aided by a stream of orders for local departments and counties to prepare boats and men for what proved to be a fictitious princely tour. Second, at least one provincial governor had received the man but not reported this to the emperor. Far more than Meng's boldness itself, the emperor was troubled by the behavior of his provincial officials. Their silence had enabled the ruse to go undetected for two years.

Four days after Meng's capture, the emperor spoke at length and with palpable frustration on the procedures governing missions from the capital. He compared two model examples (one involving a bondservant he had sent to draw maps and the other the delivery of imperial gifts to an official) with the recent case of Yu Laifeng, a palace servant who had left the capital without permission and managed to travel unhindered all the way to Jiangsu, where he obtained money from his cousin, the governor.

> When I deputed Li Bingzhong and others to go draw maps, they were all given seals and the governors-general and governors' offices were notified with documents. Now Xu Yuanmeng, here, when I bestowed upon him books of my own writing, there was proof for each one. With the people I send I am as strict and cautious as this, yet in the matter of Yu Laifeng, at the time of the Board inquiry, many still hesitated, fearing that he was someone I had commissioned. This was all because governors-general and governors were slow and doubtful and did not memorialize, but only gave him traveling expenses and urged him to leave their territories, with this extreme result. How, in broad daylight, could they send a goblin roaming as he pleased?[30]

This was a curious problem indeed. The emperor had set precedents by identifying his envoys with seals and other bureaucratic documentation, yet provincial officials were overlooking the lack of

proper credentials so as not to offend the powerful (the emperor himself in the case of Yu Laifeng, and now Yinzhi in the case of Meng Guangzu). The result was a small authority vacuum, an awkward space into which unscrupulous subordinates—or even outright impostors—could insert themselves.

The obvious and ideal solution, from the emperor's perspective, was for officials to verify the facts when dealing with envoys from the capital. With regard to princes' subordinates he made the point with an edict:

> If a prince . . . sends someone to bestow clothing and other things on a high official in the provinces, then the official should detain the agent and submit a document thanking the prince or *age* for his benevolence.[31] If [the prince sends someone] to purchase items, the official should also detain the agent and itemize the objects to be given to his master. Thus will truth and fiction be immediately distinguished. Sending people all over the provinces to ruin the master's reputation is unacceptable.[32]

As to his own envoys, the emperor elaborated on his habitual precautions, illustrating the point with reference to an incident in which a eunuch had tried to present a special variety of rice to a nobleman as if it had come from the palace:

> Whenever I bestow something, whom I send to deliver it and to whom it is given are all entered into the record. When the duke Laiši sought the red rice that I eat from the eunuch Zouhai and Zouhai could not obtain it, he bought it at market in order to deceive Laiši. When the matter was discovered, I had Zouhai executed. My investigation of people is as rigorous as that.[33]

The emperor returned to these issues seven months later, in connection with a seemingly unrelated issue. Irritated by two memorials requesting that he designate an heir apparent, he embarked on a wide-ranging lecture on his methods and philosophy of government. Beginning with the nature and proper use of secret memorials, he spoke of provincial officials as his most trusted and enabling assistants, and compared his own methods of intelligence gathering with those of former rulers. This called to mind the travesty of the Meng Guangzu affair, and particularly what had gone wrong and right at provincial governors' offices:

> Meng Guangzu used the Third Prince's name to tour the provinces, and no one but Zhao Hongxie could submit a memorial of impeachment! . . . In this affair, Zhao Hongxie was the most meritorious. As soon as he discovered it, all the realm knew.[34]

If Zhao Hongxie was meritorious, Sichuan governor Nian Gengyao

and Jiangxi governor Tong Guorang (fl. 1690s to 1710s) most assuredly were not. Both had met Meng Guangzu in person, exchanged gifts with him, and sent him on his way, and neither had reported his encounter to the emperor. Under interrogation, Meng revealed that he had presented Nian with a hat, shoes, and a knife, all in Yinzhi's name, and that Nian in turn had given him forty ounces of silver and a mule. In Jiangxi, Tong Guorang had given him cloth and silver.[35] The emperor ordered both governors to explain their behavior. There is no record of Tong's response, but Nian submitted three memorials. The first two, no longer extant, left the emperor unsatisfied and demanding a fuller accounting. The third survives and, read in combination with other documents, sheds light on the emperor's position vis-à-vis his provincial officials.

Nian Gengyao was in a difficult spot. He had initially declared that when Meng Guangzu approached him he had sent him away with a rebuke.[36] Now Meng was in custody in Beijing, and his confession stated that he and the governor had exchanged gifts. Nian thus stood exposed in the awkward position of having responded to a princely overture (one that turned out not to be the prince's at all, but a farce concocted by a scoundrel) and then deceived the emperor about it. With little room for maneuvering, he managed to respond with a skillful combination of obsequiousness and suggestion. Readily admitting the inescapable fact of not having arrested or reported on Meng, he insisted that this was simply a matter of poor judgment. As to the more serious offenses of exchanging gifts and then lying to the emperor, he flatly denied them. Clinging doggedly to his original account, he suggested that Meng was lying so as to exact revenge for the cold reception Nian (claimed he) had given him, and that officials at court, ignorant of Nian's frankness and the basic moral sense he had acquired in the course of two decades of imperial instruction, wrongfully suspected him of indecision and deceit. The memorial was manipulative: Nian presumed that the emperor doubted the truth of Meng's confession and was sagaciously allowing the governor to set the record straight. He also made subtle but unmistakable references to his own uncommon talent and usefulness in a strategic post on the western frontier. Casting himself as a foolish but incorruptible servant, he attempted to join the emperor on the moral high ground and lump Meng and the court officials together on the other side.[37]

As a response to repeated demands for further explanation, Nian's memorial must have disappointed the emperor. Essentially a rhetorical exercise, its chief logical arguments—that, as a subordinate of Yinzhen, Nian would have no reason to curry favor with Yinzhi, and that as he had always admitted his errors and been forgiven in the past there was no incentive to deceive the emperor in the present—

were based on a claimed forthrightness that the case at hand was calling into to question. In effect the memorial was a declaration that Nian had nothing more to say, and it only remained for the emperor to disgrace him or "restore Your minister's reputation so as to plan for future service." This stubborn, minimal defense reduced the case to its basic elements, two conflicting stories, and threw it back on the emperor for a final decision.

The imperial rescript on this memorial was a laconic "Noted." Nian's protests of innocence had not swayed the Board of Punishments, and although the emperor suspended his sentence, he approved the verdict. Nian was stripped of his title but allowed to stay on in his post.[38] It appears, then, that the emperor believed Nian to be guilty. It is possible that he was saved, as Silas Wu suggests, by Yinzhen, his master in the Bordered Yellow Banner.[39] Even more likely is that his competence as a frontier official made the difference.[40] As for Tong Guorang, this case may have been the last straw for a man already out of favor. Dismissed from provincial office once before, Tong finally ran aground with his handling of Meng Guangzu.[41] It probably did not help that he was a scion of the "half-of-the-court Tong" (*Tong banchao*) clan, several of whose members had joined in the ill-fated maneuvering to win the heirdom for Yinsi in 1708.[42] For his role in the Meng Guangzu affair, Tong was dismissed and subsequently exiled to the western frontier.[43]

There were multiple layers in the Kangxi emperor's frustration with regard to his provincial officials. On the surface was anger over bureaucratic negligence and incompetence, but beneath that lay suspicion that he was being deceived, and beneath that the fear of factional intrigue. Provincial officialdom's silence in the Meng case confronted the emperor with the limits of his secret communication system and revealed yet another effect of the succession problem on the bureaucracy.

All of this was a perfect example of the bureaucratic problem of agency, the gap between what the ruler expected of his appointed agents and what they were actually willing to do on his behalf. Philip Kuhn has shown the competing interests of the Qianlong emperor (arbitrary power) and his officials (routine power), and the strategies that each side could bring to bear in their ongoing struggle for control over the system of power and status that Kuhn defines as "bureaucratic monarchy."[44] The Kangxi court and bureaucracy were not so fully developed, but the basic tension already obtained, and Meng Guangzu made it worse by stepping between the monarch and his bureaucrats, enticing the latter to set duty aside and nurture their own interests. The Meng episode also showed the emperor (if he needed to be shown) that due to the unresolved question of the

succession there were in fact nascent principal-agent relationships that did not include himself, but focused instead on one or another of the princes. The monarch had hoped that his palace memorial system would prevent or expose such developments, but in this case governors had decided not to use it. The intelligence-gathering mechanism had broken down when it did not serve the interests of its agents.

A final element in the emperor's numerous comments on this case was the issue of reputation. In April of 1717, when Meng was still at large, the emperor complained, "I am deeply vexed by this affair. . . . Reckless scholars will believe the rumors, think that [Yinzhi] really was extorting bribes in the provinces, and write it down in books."[45] The emperor repeated this concern six weeks later when, having read Meng's confession, he called for his execution and demanded an accounting by the two governors implicated in the case: "Had this matter not come to light, Chinese out in the provinces would have taken it for true and then written books to record it. Is there anything more unjust than this?"[46]

The Qing conquest of China was largely completed, militarily, with the destruction of the Three Feudatories in 1681. Memories lingered, however, and the Kangxi emperor was concerned about the circulation of anti-Manchu writings among the Chinese elite. (In the subsequent half-century, his son and grandson would elevate this concern to an obsession, persecuting Chinese scholars in a series of famous "literary inquisition" cases.)[47] He had tried, in the course of his long reign, to attract prominent Chinese scholars to the civil service and to effect Manchu-Chinese balance in government administration. The Meng Guangzu case, in addition to its obvious political implications in terms of the succession struggle and the throne's control over the bureaucracy, also raised the specter of resurgent anti-Manchu feeling among the Chinese literati.

Such were the emperor's concerns in the Meng Guangzu affair. In concrete terms, he took three direct actions in response to Meng's adventure. One was to execute Meng and another was to punish Tong Guorang and Nian Gengyao. But the swiftest response of all was an edict governing contact between princes and provincial officials. The emperor stated its basic terms, quoted above, at Court on May 29, 1717, and the formal edict, more specific and more strongly worded, is recorded in the *Veritable Records* for June 15:

> Whenever a prince sends someone to bestow articles upon a provincial official who is his subordinate, the said governor-general or governor should then memorialize. If it is a case of having no tallies yet presuming to demand boats and horses, immediately impeach and investigate.[48] If it is a case of rashly

> swindling, execute [the culprit]. If local officials privately supply him, cashier and punish them. If a governor-general or governor covers it up and does not memorialize, reduce his rank by two degrees and transfer him.[49]

This edict, issued just three weeks after Meng's capture, spoke to the Kangxi emperor's main concern in the case: the proper response of a provincial official when confronted with someone claiming to be commissioned by a prince. That he found it necessary to issue such an edict reveals two contradictions in the Qing polity, one between the emperor's interests and those of the princes and provincial officials (with princes vying for the throne and officials considering their own prospects beyond the current reign) and the other between personal and bureaucratic authority in general. (A prince's servant could intimidate a governor.) Meng Guangzu had exposed troubling weaknesses in the Qing ruling structure.

PERSONAL AND BUREAUCRATIC AUTHORITY IN THE EARLY QING

Little is known about Meng Guangzu. His true name was Meng Yide, he belonged to the Bordered Blue Banner, and his home may have been in Laishui County in Yi Department, Zhili, or a banner estate in Zhuo Department in neighboring Shuntian Prefecture.[50] The sources simply describe him as a "runaway scoundrel" and "fugitive."[51] He must have known something of a minor nobleman's dress, demeanor, and speech, for at some point or points between Zhili, Sichuan, and Jiangxi he passably played the role of a baron (*nanjue*), a grand minister (*dachen*), and a great man (*daren*).[52] He also knew enough about the bureaucracy to be able to circulate a bogus report through the lower levels of the interprovincial communications system. Perhaps he was an inactive bannerman, or a runaway servant or bodyguard, who had left the capital area to seek his fortune in the provinces.

This information, spare as it is, connects Meng Guangzu to larger issues of his day and helps explain the Kangxi emperor's response to the case. To begin with, Meng lived in a land of masters and servants and a culture of widespread, systematic extortion; or rather, from another perspective, of a kind of patron-client relationship in which superiors exacted gifts from their subordinates. From the early years of the Kangxi reign at least, it had been common not only for princes and other banner elites to extract wealth from their subordinates in the provinces, but also for their servants and other henchmen to commit various extortions and appropriations in their names.[53] The underling's abuse of "privy power" inspired in turn a final, sublime variation on the theme: imposture, or extortion by a false underling in the name of a personage with whom he had no connection.[54] The emperor was well aware of this possibility and grasped its deeper

political significance as well. Early in the course of the Meng Guangzu affair, he warned:

> Not only people sent by princes, but even people I send to make secret inquiries, you ministers should investigate their authenticity and secretly memorialize. This concerns the state, and you cannot lightly overlook it. Yu Laifeng privately left the capital and caused trouble in the provinces. I have already investigated and sentenced him. If such an audacious person does not fear the law of the ruler, then we cannot say no one would commit fraud by pretending to be a prince's agent.[55]

The extension or accrual of a master's authority to his servants easily led to confusion with regard to rank and the proper objects of deference and loyalty. An early example at the top of the hierarchy concerned Dorgon (1612–50), who ruled as prince-regent during the Shunzhi emperor's minority. When Dorgon was at the height of his power, his messengers were not required to dismount when riding past a prince.[56] The Kangxi emperor was keenly aware of the problem as it related to his own authority, and he found his officials too willing to offer deference where none was ritually or legally due. In a case of 1715, for instance, Guizhou governor Liu Yinshu submitted a map of that province and began the accompanying memorial with reference to "the great man imperially commissioned to draw maps." The emperor's rescript read, "Noted. No commissioner was sent. The memorial's reference to a 'great man' is inappropriate. Who is the 'great man'? Check and memorialize again."[57] Liu's embarrassed response is revealing:

> Whenever I have encountered an imperial envoy in the provinces, without regard to rank I have always called him "great man," and through repetition it has become habitual. Your minister, simple and direct, has been an official for thirty years, but is still rustic in demeanor.[58]

A year later Liu slipped again, this time when preparing a confidential memorial for the throne. Closing with the customary identification of the messengers who would deliver it, he wrote "household servant Zhang Xiang and [Green Standard] squad leader Li Guoying." The imperial rescript reads, "Noted. Putting squad leader after servant is not appropriate."[59] In other words, the emperor was scolding Liu for giving his own personal servant precedence over an appointed official. Although a fine point, Governor Liu's misranking of messengers certainly caught the monarch's attention, and it spoke to a more general tension between personal and bureaucratic authority. Such contradictions, and the ambiguity that flowed from them, created opportunities and suggested methods for the abuse of privy power.

Tapping into the culture of privy power, Meng Guangzu's manipulation of princely authority also flew in the face of the Kangxi emperor's ongoing efforts to concentrate power and authority on the throne. This was a gradual process that began before the Manchu conquest and would culminate in the Yongzheng and early Qianlong reigns. One of the Kangxi emperor's key contributions to it was the weakening of the nobility, and part of his strategy involved appointing his own brothers and sons to key positions in the banner hierarchy.[60] While this did succeed in concentrating power in the ruling family, it created new problems when that family was torn apart, and the bureaucracy split along factional lines, by the succession struggle. Meng Guangzu's choice of a fictive master spoke eloquently to this new power configuration, for he could hardly have made a better choice than Yinzhi, the emperor's third son and a candidate for the throne.

A further contribution to the consolidation of imperial power, and one of the Kangxi emperor's greatest innovations, was the development of the palace memorial system.[61] We are properly cognizant of its strengths and successes as an intelligence-gathering and control mechanism, but the Meng Guangzu affair laid bare its limitations. The efficacy of the system was ultimately dependent upon officials' dutiful submission of informative reports, but this, too, was complicated by the succession struggle and the factional competition it engendered. Especially after Yinreng's final deposal, the situation was fraught with uncertainty, which created opportunity for a marginal but astute bannerman. Out in the provinces, the appearance of a prince's agent at a governor's office (yamen) called for rapid calculation on the governor's part. How could he retain the trust of the present emperor and at the same time safeguard his own position for the day when one of the princes would ascend the throne? The simplest answer was to play along and keep quiet. Thus, when Meng Guangzu presented himself at the Jiangxi and Sichuan governors' offices as the Third Prince's envoy, he could well have predicted that they would either welcome him or pay him off and send him on his way. He was taking advantage of high officialdom's uncertainty surrounding the future of the throne.

CHAPTER 2

Secret Agents: High Tide and Disappearance, 1723–1800

MAYOR: Gentlemen, I have invited you here to convey to you some extremely unpleasant news. We are to be visited by a government inspector.
JUDGE: Inspector?
WARDEN OF CHARITIES: What inspector?
MAYOR: A government inspector from St. Petersburg. Incognito. And, what's more, with secret instructions.

—Gogol, *The Government Inspector*

MENG GUANGZU WAS NOT UNIQUE. THE POLITICAL INSTABILity that set the stage for his performance continued into the reign of the Yongzheng emperor, the victor in the succession struggle. The harsh dynamics of that contest, combined with tensions between the throne and a still-restive conquest elite, made power and loyalty shifting variables in the politics of the late Kangxi and Yongzheng years. One product of this volatile political environment was a string of high-level impostures in which the perpetrators claimed to have been sent on a special mission, either by a prince or by the emperor himself.

IMPERIAL AND PRINCES' AGENTS IN THE YONGZHENG YEARS, 1723–35

The Yongzheng period saw at least twenty such deceptions. Seven times in those thirteen years, provincial officials reported encounters with suspicious characters claiming to be working for a prince. In 1726, for example, a bannerman traveling from Beijing to his garrison in Ningxia told an innkeeper that Yinti, the fourteenth prince, had sent him to deliver a letter to Yintang, the ninth.[1] Later that same year, reports that a "prince's minister" was conducting a river inspection tour began circulating through central China. No such tour took place, and the search for the said minister turned up no suspects.[2] Three years later, a phony "His Honor" (Da laoye) anchored his boat at Hankow, flying a yellow flag and telling suspicious officials that he was on his way to Guangdong to open a mine. He claimed to be under orders from the powerful Imperial Prince Yi.[3] In Shanxi in 1733, a Zhili bannerman and four fellow travelers claimed that a prince of the blood of the second degree (*junwang*) had dispatched them to monitor a lumber shipment.[4]

Princes were exalted figures indeed, but in choosing an authority to presume upon many frauds set their sights even higher. For the same period there are thirteen recorded incidents of a false claim to be acting on the emperor's orders. These included a lower gentryman traveling in the capital area who claimed to have been specially assigned, in a court audience, to investigate local affairs in the five

metropolitan prefectures;[5] a self-proclaimed expectant official who intimidated officials in the Guangxi provincial capital by riding in a sedan chair and claiming that the emperor had sent him to accompany a former governor to Fujian to inspect granaries;[6] an impoverished Zhili cotton trader who visited the Jiangning County magistrate, claiming to be a probationary official under imperial orders to check pawnshop interest rates en route to his post in Zhejiang;[7] and bandits along the Yangzi River whose tactics included claiming to be on an imperial commission.[8]

Historical sources for these cases are limited, consisting of the surviving reports of provincial officials, the emperor's handwritten responses, and a few full-fledged imperial edicts. In most cases we do not know the final outcome; all we learn is that a crime had been detected, or was suspected, and trial or investigation was under way. The sources do provide some detail on the nature of the ruses adopted and the official reactions, however, revealing the outlines of a criminal environment evolving with changes in the political order.

Perpetrators and Motivations

In the twenty cases of the Yongzheng period, the false assignments included seven regional inspections, four criminal investigations or manhunts, three commercial missions, and three pilgrimages.[9] The identity of choice was roving investigator; more than half of the suspects claimed to have been sent out from the capital on special investigative assignments. The culprits included three monks and two eunuchs, an officer of troops in a prince's retinue, a banner soldier, a cashiered official, the son of a dismissed courier station master, a merchant, a fortune-teller, a bandit leader, an escaped convict, and one man simply identified as a commoner. This list covers only two-thirds of the cases, but it does suggest a variety of occupations and social backgrounds.

The lack of specificity in this regard is partly offset by details on the methods employed in each deception, which show a broad range of relative knowledge and ignorance of official procedures, documents, and paraphernalia. At one end of the spectrum were such perpetrators as the eunuch Zheng Jinzhong, who clearly knew something about imperially commissioned pilgrimages, and the phantom "prince's minister" who nearly succeeded, like Meng Guangzu before him, in mobilizing the military escort system throughout central China. At the other were such obvious fakes as Hai Zihong, the escaped convict who "looked like a real good-for-nothing" as he stood on the street outside the Sichuan governor-general's yamen, and Huang Qirui, whom the emperor surmised was "probably insane." Huang claimed to be a "great man" hunting for the "fugitive criminals" Yintang and Yin'e.[10] Insane or not, he was poorly informed:

Yintang had been dead for nine years, Yin'e in confinement for eleven.[11]

Three suspects tried to get by through bluffing alone, but at least ten used some form of supporting document or credential, be it a personal visiting card, a letter with an official seal on it, or a forged decree. In each case, however, the documents were either obvious forgeries or inappropriate or insufficient for the occasion. Thus, while many of these men were literate, they did not possess the requisite degrees of what might be called official literacy. That is, their deceptions betrayed inadequate command of official documents and procedures.

As for motivations, almost every impersonation concerned money, either obtaining it or avoiding having to pay it. Seven were business-related, the culprits trying to secure a lucrative commercial appointment, close a business deal, force loans, collect debts, tip the balance in a land dispute, or avenge the disruption of a marital alliance. Another seven were travel-related. Here the suspects used their false claims to obtain free lodging or transport or to extort money for travel expenses. Some worked official courier station routes, while others tried to live in style by visiting provincial officials.

ROOM FOR FRAUD: POLITICS AND RULING STYLE

As shown by the Meng Guangzu episode, impersonation was a potentially effective strategy because it (falsely) conferred the backing and authority of an important personage on someone who was otherwise marginal and powerless. The fraud confronted his intended victim with the prospect of offending the great man if he failed to treat his deputy well. A political environment largely created by the succession question enabled Meng Guangzu to do this toward the end of the Kangxi reign, but why did such deceptions become so common in the Yongzheng period? Several factors were at work, including political struggle, the emperor's religious proclivities, and peculiarities of his relationship with provincial officialdom.

Political Intrigue

The Yongzheng period was rife with political intrigue. Yinzhen's accession as the Yongzheng emperor followed a decade of bitter factional competition, and the early years of his reign were marked by spectacular political dramas as he neutralized erstwhile competitors, their supporters, and other potential threats to his authority. In 1724, he imprisoned his brother Yin'e. Yinsi, Yinti, and Yintang, all of whom had been deeply involved in the succession struggle, were separately confined in the summer of 1726, their "crimes" broadcast far and wide by imperial decree. Yinsi and Yintang died, perhaps of starvation, that September, and Yinti languished until 1735, when he

was released by Yinzhen's successor.[12] In 1730, Yinzhi was also placed in confinement, where he died two years later.[13] The Kangxi emperor had already placed Yinreng, the former heir apparent, and Yinti (1672–1734), the eldest prince, in confinement, and there they died in in 1725 and 1734, respectively.[14]

There were also several high-profile cases involving powerful officials. Most spectacular was that of Nian Gengyao, the governor of Sichuan who nearly wrecked his own career in the Meng Guangzu episode but went on to prove himself a valuable frontier administrator. Successively elevated to the Sichuan and Sichuan-Shaanxi governor-generalships late in the Kangxi reign, Nian became a bulwark of Yinzhen's fledgling regime in the period 1722–24, helping the new emperor stabilize the northwest both militarily and politically. Yinzhen treated Nian with uncommon favor, bestowing a succession of noble titles culminating in a hereditary dukedom. By the end of 1724, however, he had turned against him. In a yearlong campaign he isolated Nian politically, stripped him of all his ranks and titles, and finally sentenced him to death for a list of ninety-two crimes.[15] Succeeding Nian as Sichuan-Shaanxi governor-general was a subordinate, Yue Zhongqi, who gained his own measure of imperial favor until 1732, when he was impeached for misdeeds in the war against the Eleuths. He lost his official titles, his property was confiscated, and the emperor sentenced him to death in 1734.[16]

This grim political landscape provided inspiration for at least three smalltime impersonators. In 1726, barely a month after Nian Gengyao's death, a bannerman tried to extort shopkeepers and local elders in Shanxi by telling them he was hunting Nian's supporters and also delivering a letter from Yinti to Yintang.[17] In 1734, an escaped convict seeking revenge in a marital dispute told the Sichuan governor-general that the emperor had sent him to investigate the disgraced Yue Zhongqi's household assets.[18] 1735 saw the abovementioned case of Huang Qirui, who pretended to be secretly pursuing Yintang and Yin'e.[19] Each of these schemes drew on one of the famous "cases" of the period, the impersonators finding their material in the harsh realities of Yongzheng politics.

Yinzhen and Chan Buddhism

The early years of the Yongzheng reign also saw three cases in which a dubious character claimed to have been sent on a pilgrimage by a very important personage. In March of 1723, ten weeks after the Kangxi emperor's death, a eunuch and his attendant arrived at the Zhejiang governor's yamen demanding men and horses. The eunuch claimed that the late emperor and one of his concubines had sent him on a pilgrimage the previous summer. He carried no certifying documents, however, and his speech was strange. The governor had

the pair kept under guard and dispatched a memorial requesting instructions. The new emperor responded with a rescript indicating this was "clearly a major criminal falsifying an edict" and ordering that he should be brought to the capital for vigorous interrogation.[20]

This case may have been a holdover from the previous reign. At the least, the eunuch invoked the authority of the deceased emperor, who could neither confirm nor deny his story. But he may also have been presuming upon the known proclivities of the new monarch, whose accession, events would soon demonstrate, provided fertile ground for such deceptions.

Yinzhen was a devotee of Chan Buddhism both before and during his reign as Yongzheng emperor. His associations with monks, and ultimately even his self-identification as one of their number, were common knowledge. As a prince in the decade before his accession, he had studied Buddhist texts, visited local temples, and discussed doctrine with Chan monks, and, on one occasion, even convened a religious gathering (*fahui*) at his residence. At least once during these years he presented a monk with a fan inscribed with verse in his own hand. As emperor, he sometimes referred to himself metaphorically as a monk and claimed that he had achieved sudden enlightenment. During his short reign, he actively engaged in Buddhist philosophical disputes and publication projects, commissioned the construction and renovation of temples, elevated Buddhist worthies, and dispatched favorite monks to take charge of famous monasteries in the provinces. At least one monk, the Buddhist master Wenjue, was rumored to have been active in court politics, advising the emperor in his purges of Yintang, Yinti, Nian Gengyao, and Longkedo, commander of the Beijing Gendarmerie. In 1733, the emperor would send this master on a pilgrimage to Jiangnan, traveling with the escort due a prince and honored by local officials along the way.[21]

In the fall of 1724, a monk named Zhengxiu appeared at the office of the director-general for the capital granaries at Tongzhou, requesting an interview. Also giving the name "Monk Four" (Si Heshang), he identified himself as a prince's "substitute monk" and abbot at Bailing Temple, just returned from a pilgrimage to Mount Wutai. The purpose of his visit was to recommend an old acquaintance for the position of "first agent" in charge of managing the coming year's grain transport.[22]

It was an untimely approach. According to the two officials who reported the incident, it had indeed been customary to secure the "first agent" position through bribery, but in the previous year these same officials had put an end to such corruption by adopting a new system: they chose ten of the wealthiest agents and then selected the "first agent" from among their number by drawing lots.[23] Now, by

mentioning an influential patron (in this case an imperial prince, perhaps the emperor himself) and then suggesting a designee for the no-doubt lucrative position, the unfortunate monk was using obsolete methods.[24]

The emperor responded bluntly and categorically that there could be no truth to the monk's story:

> A matter without even the slightest foundation. How could a princely establishment have this kind of substitute monk? Arrest and investigate, make clear through rigorous interrogation, draft a sentence and memorialize. Hateful and audacious in the extreme.[25]

Subsequent investigation revealed that this "evil monk Zhengxiu" had also visited the Xuanhua regional commander, Xu Guozhu. According to Xu's account, a circuit intendant had sent him a visiting card, soliciting a donation and stating that the monk was an old acquaintance. "In a moment of foolishness," Xu had given the monk six ounces of silver.[26]

A month after Zhengxiu's misadventure at the capital granaries, another monk appeared at the departmental yamen in Tongzhou, Jiangsu. Calling himself Mingben, he claimed to have received an imperial decree to make a pilgrimage to Jiuhua and Putuo mountains and, on the return trip, to inspect roads and walls along the Fujian and Jiangnan coasts. The magistrate handed Mingben over to the acting provincial governor. The latter was very skeptical of the man's story but reluctant to act precipitously, since the monk had invoked an imperial decree. Therefore, he kept him under guard while submitting a memorial to request instructions as to whether he should deliver him to Beijing or dispose of him locally. The imperial rescript was forceful: the monk's behavior was "odious in the extreme," and he should be rigorously investigated and sentenced.[27]

Six months later, the emperor heard that at the late monk Hongsu's residence there was a copy of the Diamond Sutra that he had bestowed when he was still a prince. It contained a preface written in Yinzhen's own hand, and Hongsu's disciples wanted to distribute printed copies. The emperor did not recall writing the preface or even giving Hongsu the sutra. Suspicious, he had it brought to him and found that neither the prose nor the handwriting were his own. As Hongsu was already dead, he ordered that the other monks of the monastery be questioned as to why they had not submitted the document before or, if they did not believe it to be in the imperial hand, why they had not reported the forgery.[28]

With this, the third monk-related case in ten months, Yinzhen had had enough. The day after he saw the forgery, he issued a special decree to the Board of Rites in which he emphasized that even though

as a prince he had in his free time discussed Buddhist texts with monks at the Bolin Monastery, which happened to be near his residence, this did not mean the monks were his political advisors. All the more now that he was emperor, how could he secretly use monks to rule the realm? Behavior such as that of the two monks in Zhili and Jiangnan, who falsely claimed to have received his decrees and stirred up trouble, had a great effect on the emperor's reputation; it was incumbent upon the board to stamp it out rigorously. He further commanded that, although the grace period for returning documents written in his hand had already expired, he had been lenient and refrained from thorough investigation of those that had not been handed in, and even those that were forgeries. Now, the board must instruct provincial authorities that all such documents should be returned within one year, and any further omissions would be punished.[29]

Yinzhen's protests notwithstanding, it was obvious that monks were a special group, some of whose members enjoyed proximity to the throne. This proximity allowed for exaggeration and even outright fabrication regarding a given monk's relationship with the Son of Heaven. Like the eunuch Zheng Jinzhong, the monks Zhengxiu, Mingben, and perhaps Hongsu availed themselves of the opportunities this created. Their impostures fed on common knowledge and rumor surrounding the emperor.

The Question of Secret Missions

In the spring of 1730, a dismissed assistant magistrate named Zhang Pengfei called on Zhejiang governor-general Li Wei at his offices in Hangzhou. Zhang, the younger brother of the former Grand Secretary Zhang Pengge, told the governor he was participating in a secret, imperially ordered investigation of provincial government and the populace. He then proceeded to critique the performance of two local officials and to list his own nephew's demerits. Suspecting fraud but not certain, Li rebuked the man and reported the episode to the throne.[30]

Li's report elicited a strong reaction from the emperor, who issued a special edict that went beyond the case at hand to the broader question of secret missions in general. This decree represents the Yongzheng emperor's definitive policy statement on the problem. It began with a declaration:

> In the eight years since I ascended the throne, there has not been a single instance in which I commissioned someone to conduct secret investigations. If there is a matter like investigating and judging a case or pursuing rebels, I definitely give the agent credentials and order him to manage the matter in cooperation with the local governor-general or

> governor. . . . And yet, traitorous vagabonds are always falsely claiming to have received an edict to conduct secret investigations, using this as a strategy to extort the ignorant, and lawless monks and Daoist priests also use this to scheme for profit and deceive people. . . .[31]

Hereafter, the edict instructed, local officials were to promptly arrest anyone making such a claim and report the matter to their governor or governor-general so that he could memorialize the throne.[32]

This edict echoed the Kangxi emperor's ruminations on the Meng Guangzu case twelve years before. Like them, it contained a protest that the emperor did not send special agents into the provinces without notifying local officials. Both rulers also emphasized the importance of authenticating credentials. However, the later edict also reflected a changed political scene. The Kangxi emperor had been frustrated by officialdom's failure to keep him informed of his sons' activities in the provinces, and the ultimate sources of this frustration were the succession question and the factional maneuverings it produced. In 1730, the succession question was moot and princes were fast disappearing from the political landscape, but imposture continued with the emperor himself as the most frequently invoked authority. Significantly, provincial officials were uncertain as to whether he was sending special agents into their midst.

They had grounds for uncertainty. To begin with, the record of a mysterious incident in 1725 suggests that, his later denial notwithstanding, the Yongzheng emperor did have occasional recourse to secret agents. In March of that year, a man claiming to be the servant of an imperial guardsman visited the prefect of Zhengding, Zhili, saying he had been sent to inform him that two nearby fords should be blocked to boat traffic. He further stated that there was an imperial decree to make an arrest. When the prefect went to make inquiries, he found two men surnamed Dai and Xi, who did not give their full names, and four attendants. Dai and Xi told him the matter was extremely sensitive, so they were not even wearing their sashes and would not present the decree or travel documents. They also visited the county magistrate, informing him they had received a decree to arrest someone who had set out from Xi'an the previous day. They asked the magistrate to send six runners to assist in waiting for the criminal at the main road by the Hutuo River, and also to block other roads and ferry traffic.[33]

The Zhili governor-general, Li Weiyun, received his subordinates' reports the next day and, sharing their puzzlement, memorialized the throne. In a terse rescript, the emperor approved this precaution but informed Li that the guardsmen were indeed on an imperial commission.[34] Official sources such as the *Diaries of Activity and*

Repose and the *Veritable Records* offer no clear solution to the mystery. This was early in the Yongzheng reign, however, when the emperor was still working to consolidate his grasp on the throne. At this very moment he was beginning to move against his erstwhile favorite, Nian Gengyao, and the final persecution of Yinsi and Yintang, his chief enemies in the succession struggle, was just a year away. It is possible that the guardsmen's mysterious mission related to such intrigues.

This episode casts doubt on the emperor's declaration, five years later, that he "never" employed secret agents and points instead to an inconsistency in his relationship with provincial officialdom. The edict itself contained the curious statement that "if someone has truly received an edict to conduct secret investigations, then he should not reveal this to others. If he has revealed it to others, then this person's indiscretion and the fact that it will certainly be difficult for him to avoid disaster are manifest." The ominous reference to the dire consequences of indiscretion reads like an admonition to future secret agents. That could not have been wholly reassuring to officials in the field, for while declaring that anyone approaching them with an undocumented claim of a secret mission was certainly a fraud, it also implied that there might indeed be secret agents at work entirely unbeknownst to them. In short, for all its forcefulness, the edict left the emperor's own methods in doubt. Six months later, another episode further highlighted the uncertainty of the official terrain.

In January of 1731, twelve men stayed at an inn at Ningwu, Shanxi, claiming to have received a secret imperial decree to "manage a secret matter." When questioned by the county magistrate, their leader, one Su Zhilong, said he was working for the Imperial Household Department and that Imperial Prince Guo had relayed a command to purchase mules for the army.[35] When pressed for credentials, Su declared that "We, when managing matters for His Highness, have never carried licenses." This evasive speech and failure to produce credentials ensured that he and his traveling companions were detained and passed up the official hierarchy to the provincial governor, who had them kept under guard and sent word to Beijing. In his rescript on the governor's memorial, the emperor wrote, "How could this be? A scoundrel pretending to be on a mission, without a doubt."[36] But two days later, on the basis of new information, he was forced to issue a new edict: Su and his fellow detainees should all be released immediately, for they had indeed been sent on a special mission. A month before, Prince Guo had ordered the Imperial Household Department merchant Fan Yubin to purchase and transport uniforms for the army, and Fan in turn had sent his assistant Su Zhilong to buy them in Datong and Ningwu. Fearing that prices would soar once word got out, Fan had instructed Su not to reveal the true

nature of his mission.[37]

This incident is revealing in several ways. At one level, it shows the system working as it should: Observing suspicious activity, local officials detained Su Zhilong and reported to their superiors, who in turn informed the emperor. Su's reticence and his failure to present credentials led everyone from the local magistrate to the emperor himself to assume that he was an impostor. Subsequently the monarch made a point of absolving local officials of any blame, approving their vigilance and noting that he, too, had been mistaken.[38]

At another level, however, Su's mission reveals a certain looseness in the conduct of government business. Regulations dictated that agents present credentials and officials demand to see them, but in this case the exigencies of military procurement kept a legitimate agent from following this protocol. While Su's reticence on the purpose of his trip is understandable, his failure to present identifying credentials is more puzzling. His master, Fan Yubin, was a prominent merchant whose family enjoyed a longstanding relationship with the Imperial Household Department.[39] Interestingly, there was no paper trail and ultimate verification came not from Imperial Household Department records, but from the mouth of Fan Yubin. Moreover, in the end the emperor blamed the mix-up on Su Zhilong for speaking confusedly, and made no comment on the subject of credentials or Fan's instructions to maintain secrecy. This implied that, Su's poor storytelling aside, there was nothing wrong with the mission itself.

Uncertainty thus arose from the informality of the mission, which, though secret and only semiofficial (deputed by a merchant), was nonetheless legitimate and not to be obstructed. The apparent lesson for local officials, just six months after the emperor had issued his stern edict on persons claiming to be on secret missions, was that suspicious characters telling strange stories were probably frauds—but then again they might be genuine and acting on high authority.

Taken together, these issues of political intrigue, the emperor's religious proclivities, and the question of secret missions all contributed to a climate of uncertainty in the provinces. This created room for doubt when it came to someone claiming to be on a secret mission. These zones of uncertainty were the impostor's special niches in the Yongzheng period.[40]

IMPERSONATION IN THE QIANLONG ERA

High-level impostures continued in the Qianlong reign, but there was a pronounced decline in both the number of cases and their political importance. In the thirteen years of the Yongzheng period twenty different frauds invoked either the emperor's or a prince's authority, but in the sixty years of the Qianlong era there were only six, and not a single case is recorded for the subsequent Jiaqing reign. The crime

that flowered in the late Kangxi and Yongzheng periods faded away. Whence the change?

The Qianlong-era cases themselves offer some clues: three of them concerned princes, and three the emperor. They occurred as follows: In 1742 a former banner soldier named Wang Baozhu was convicted of attempting to deceive the Shanxi salt supervisor by posing as an agent of Imperial Prince He (Hongzhou) and, delivering a letter forged in his name, requesting that a salt monopoly license be restored to a merchant who had lost his to a competitor.[41] In 1748, a merchant named Chen Dechang told the prefect of Nan'an, Jiangxi, that Prince Shen had sent him to buy lumber for the emperor's use.[42] In 1764, the ne'er-do-well son of a shopkeeper wandered through Fengtian, leeching food, clothing, money, and lodging off a succession of unsuspecting families by telling them he was the "adoptive son" (*yizi*) of a prince who had sent him to "investigate matters."[43] Later that same year, a poor Beijing horse tender named Cai Yuanqing tried to swindle three men of several thousand ounces of silver by convincing them he had obtained permission to open a silver mine in Shanxi. He posed as an imperial guard and carried a forged Board of Revenue certificate with the characters *fengzhi* ("an edict has been received") written across the top.[44]

Fifteen years later, in 1780, a Buddhist monk presented a small boy to the Qianlong emperor, declaring that he was the second son of the late Imperial Prince Li (Yongcheng, the emperor's fourth son, 1739–77). The monk explained that the boy, who was said to have died in infancy, had in fact been expelled from the prince's household by a jealous concubine. When interrogated by Grand Councillors, the child confessed that the monk had told him what to say. The monk was decapitated and the boy exiled to Xinjiang, where he continued, however, to claim he was the emperor's grandson. Ultimately he, too, was executed.[45]

Finally, in Gansu in 1786, in the last great impersonation case of the Qianlong period, a wandering ex-convict named Xia Yinglong separately persuaded an innkeeper and a mule driver that he was a noble scion and high official named Fu Tianbao, sent by the emperor on a secret mission to monitor activities among the Muslims (Huimin) there. Prevailing on his dupes to give him money, clothing, and a horse, he dispatched both victims to the capital with phony letters to his alleged mother and the promise of an official post as reward for their services.[46]

These cases are too few, and the archival base too imperfect, to allow for firm conclusions in a comparison with those of the previous two decades. One clear difference does emerge, however: a change in significance. A new political landscape is evident in the two great

impersonations of the reign, those of the "emperor's grandson" and Fu Tianbao.

The Imperial Grandson

The appearance of the supposed imperial grandson certainly had some political implications. Were the claim to be accepted, the boy would have been catapulted from the status of anonymous foundling to prince of the blood, and the monk, as his savior, could only have benefited from such an outcome. There would also have been repercussions in the deceased prince's household, perhaps reversing the fortunes of the concubines and their families. It is not entirely certain, moreover, that the child was an impostor. Although that is the official conclusion related in the *Draft History of the Qing*, the unofficial account in Zhaolian's (1780–1833) random notes withheld final judgment. Its last lines read:

> Yet I hear that a eunuch of [Yongcheng's] establishment, surnamed Yang, said "When Prince Li's second son had smallpox he did not in fact die. [The jealous concubine] Wang secretly switched him with another child's body, ordering the prince's catamite [*nongtong*] Salinga to carry him out of the establishment and abandon him in open country. . . ." Hence, there was probably some foundation to what the monk taught the false son, and it did not come about without reason.[47]

Was the boy a fraud coached by an unscrupulous and opportunistic monk, or a genuine prince-to-be who had been deprived of his inheritance in the internal power struggles of his father's household? He was probably not the prince's son. He admitted his surname was Liu, the investigation appears to have satisfied the Qianlong emperor and grand councillors, and the eunuch's story has a fanciful quality to it. (Could an Imperial Prince's son be so easily cast into the fields?) On the other hand, years later Zhaolian did see fit to repeat the eunuch's comments, and to note that the Qianlong emperor, himself having heard rumors concerning the circumstances of his grandson's death, had been sufficiently concerned to call for an investigation. Unfortunately, the terse secondhand accounts of the case offer no additional information.

Whatever the boy's true identity, the case posed no real threat to the emperor or his control over government administration. In fact, the monk who presented him appears to have physically bypassed the bureaucracy altogether, approaching the emperor directly by intercepting his procession on its return to the capital.

Fu Tianbao

Xia Yinglong, who assumed the persona Fu Tianbao, was the only high-level impostor of the Qianlong period to declare that he was on a special investigative mission. Like his predecessors, he found material

for his fiction in the major events of the day. Unlike theirs, his material had little to do with palace intrigue. Rather, he pretended he had been sent to spy on the restive Muslims of Gansu. This was certainly a sensitive area. In the previous five years, Qing armies had suppressed two uprisings of New Teachings Muslims there, and the Qianlong emperor worried that Fu Tianbao might somehow stir up more trouble.[48] Still, Fu's alleged mission was a far cry from chasing down imperial princes or smashing a governor-general's patronage network, campaigns that had been tied to the Yongzheng emperor's struggle to destroy political enemies and consolidate his hold on the throne.

It is especially illuminating to contrast Xia Yinglong with that first great impostor at the end of the Kangxi reign, Meng Guangzu. Whereas Meng deceived some of the highest officials in the provincial bureaucracy, Xia's victims were common people, a *shengyuan* (government student) who operated an inn and a mule driver with no official rank whatsoever. Meng Guangzu worked the provincial bureaucracy for at least eighteen months before the Kangxi emperor learned of his existence. Fu Tianbao was detected quickly, his first victim being arrested just nine days after setting out to deliver his letter to the capital. Xia Yinglong managed to avoid capture for five years (he caught wind of the arrest and abandoned the Fu Tianbao persona within a month), but emperor and bureaucracy were united against him; there was no internal rift to be exploited. Meng Guangzu worried the Kangxi emperor because he revealed a dangerous political distance between ruler and bureaucracy, whereas the Qianlong emperor's first concern over Fu Tianbao was the potential for rebellion among the Muslims of the northwest. In other words, Meng ably exploited conflicting interests and systemic weakness at the heart of a fledgling monarchy, whereas Fu briefly raised the specter of regional unrest near the periphery of an unchallenged autocrat's expanding empire. The one exploited elite political conflict at the center, the other popular unrest at the margin.

Xia Yinglong told his victims that he was a hereditary marquis (*hou*) surnamed Fu, the consort of an imperial princess, and that he had served as Xi'an general. This identity combined elements of at least three contemporaneous careers in the illustrious Fuca (Ch. Fucha) clan.[49] The duke and grand secretary Fuheng (d. 1770), brother of the Qianlong emperor's first empress, had four sons.[50] One, Fulong'an (1743?–84), was an imperial son in-law, having married the Qianlong emperor's fourth daughter in 1760. He inherited Fuheng's dukedom, held a range of important capital posts over the course of his career, and served on the Grand Council from 1769 until his death in 1784.[51]

Another son, Fukang'an (1754?–96), was a talented military commander who had recently been made a marquis for his part in suppressing the Gansu Muslim uprising of 1784. He had served as a grand councillor three times between 1772 and 1784, and at the time of the Fu Tianbao case held the posts of assistant grand secretary, president of the Board of Civil Appointments, and governor-general of Shaanxi and Gansu.[52] The Beijing address to which "Fu Tianbao" addressed his letters was in fact Fukang'an's.[53] A younger brother, Fuchang'an (d. 1817), was also a rising star. In 1786, when Fu Tianbao appeared, he had been a grand councillor and vice-president of the Board of Revenue for six years.[54] Finally, the brothers' uncle Fuyu (d. 1798), a third-class duke, had been Xi'an general in 1783–84.[55]

By fashioning such an identity, Xia was placing himself in an inner circle of high-level officials and generals who were, however, beholden to the emperor for their exalted ranks and privileges. Yinzhi had been a logical choice for Meng Guangzu's imposture in 1715 because he was a power center by birth, a potential Son of Heaven. Seventy years later, the Fucas were a logical choice for Xia Yinglong because the emperor had chosen to elevate them. This circumstance, combined with the fact that he only targeted commoners, made Xia an affront but not a crisis.

The handling of the Qianlong cases betrayed little evidence of the uncertainty such frauds created within the provincial bureaucracy in the preceding reigns. There may have been some doubt on the part of the Shanxi salt supervisor in the case of Wang Baozhu, which occurred quite early in the reign, but most frauds enjoyed no such advantage. In the political world of 1715, Meng Guangzu could travel through the empire as a prince's emissary with no documentation to verify his status, and have it go unreported for nearly two years. Thirty years later, Chen Dechang did not even last two weeks in one Jiangxi prefecture before local officials seized him and informed the throne. Similarly, the acting Shanxi governor's first report on Cai Yuanqing's mining scam unequivocally labeled him a "brigand."[56] And in 1786 another Shanxi governor initiated a manhunt for Fu Tianbao even before informing the throne of that impostor's existence; clearly, he gave no credence to the man's story.[57] Altogether, the initial responses to these Qianlong-era impostures indicate both tighter local control and greater confidence among provincial officials than in previous reigns.

BUREAUCRATIZATION AND THE DECLINE OF GRAND IMPOSTURE

Why the decline, both in number of cases and in their effects on throne and bureaucracy? The change was related to the weakening of princes' power and the regularization of administrative practices in

the early to middle eighteenth century. These trends removed many of the conditions that facilitated high-level impersonation in the Yongzheng years.

The Attenuation of Princely Power

Historians have long since identified the process whereby early Qing emperors gradually wrested political power and authority from banner elites and concentrated it in their own hands. Its beginnings are evident in Hong Taiji's (1592–1643) assertion of control over three of the Eight Banners.[58] Perhaps the most fateful changes grew out of the struggle for the succession at the end of the Kangxi reign, when the newly acceded Yongzheng emperor consolidated his victory by eliminating potential challengers and restructuring banner and central government administration in a way that deprived the nobility in general, and imperial clansmen in particular, of their hereditary privileges and made them increasingly beholden to the throne.[59] He also stabilized the succession process itself by designating his heir early and secretly, the name to be revealed only upon the emperor's death. This precedent, which was followed by the next three emperors, prevented the formation of rival princes' factions for the next hundred years.[60]

The short Yongzheng reign was, then, a transition period that saw the political isolation of the princes and consequent disappearance of princes' factions, which enhanced the stability and singularity of the emperor's position. Lingering remnants of princes' antagonism toward the throne were smashed at the beginning of the Qianlong reign. Soon after the emperor's accession, a clique of disaffected princes had formed around Hongxi, son of the former heir apparent, Yinreng. The emperor issued a warning in 1737 and moved against them in 1739, the fourth year of his reign. Hongxi and Hongsheng (son of the Kangxi emperor's fifth son, Yinqi) were both sentenced to permanent confinement. Two sons of Yinxiang, the Yongzheng emperor's favorite brother, were also punished, one stripped of his princely rank and the other permanently deprived of his salary. The Kangxi emperor's sixteenth son, Yunlu (originally Yinlu), a Grand Councillor and concurrent president of the Board of Works and the Court of Colonial Affairs, was permitted to retain his noble rank but stripped of his posts and salary.[61] The authors of a recent biography of the Qianlong emperor consider this episode a final ripple of the Yinsi and Yintang cases. The Qianlong emperor's handling of the Hongxi clique, they argue, removed any threat to the monarch's power from within the imperial family.[62]

Reining in the Monks

The Qianlong throne was unencumbered by princes' factions, and the paucity of impersonations involving a prince's authority is

understandable in light of this circumstance. The simultaneous disappearance of fake *imperial* agents, however, at the very moment of the throne's ascendance over the imperial clan and nobility, is more difficult to explain. Two factors may have been at work here: the new emperor's personal vigilance and the increasingly bureaucratic character of Qing administration in general. Both are evident in the emperor's handling of Buddhist monks.

The Yongzheng emperor's patronage of Chan Buddhism created opportunities for abuse, including outright fraud. The Qianlong emperor, who did not share his father's religious proclivities and was acutely aware of the problems they created, adopted strict measures to prevent further trouble in this area. Just three days after ascending the throne, he issued a public warning to all monks his late father had "instructed" over the years.

> In all cases of monks who have in the past served in the inner court . . . if, because they chanced to see the heavenly countenance and heard the sage instruction, they then want to take advantage by exaggerating or fabricating words or using [the late emperor's name] to act illegally, such persons will by the laws of the land be brigands and in Buddhist teachings be sinners, their transgressions not on a level with normal people's. As soon as I find it out, I will certainly punish them doubly in accord with the laws of the state and the laws of the Buddha, and will not be lenient in the slightest degree.[63]

In another edict issued eight days later, the emperor ordered that monks who had attended religious gatherings at the palace must return all examples of the imperial calligraphy, whether his father's or his own, that may have been bestowed upon them.[64] A month later, on November 29, 1735, a court letter was sent to all provincial governors and governors-general.[65] It amplified the first two edicts and called for an empire-wide search of Buddhist monasteries for any examples or copies of the Shunzhi, Kangxi, and Yongzheng emperors' calligraphy or utterances and any fraudulent or exaggerated writings with any connection to any of these emperors. All such writings, whether printed or manuscript, were to be sealed up and sent to Beijing for destruction. The final draft of this court letter warned that, should it later come to light that anything had been omitted and survived the search, the governors in charge in the first two years of the reign would be held responsible. This, however, was not enough for the emperor, who wrote in further instructions that this was not a routine matter to be handled by a perfunctory posting of announcements outside temples. Rather, the governors must send agents to conduct secret inquiries and careful searches.[66]

The Qianlong emperor's distrust went beyond the small group of

clerics who had enjoyed access to his father. Exactly one month after the Yongzheng emperor's death, he reinstituted a general registration and licensing system that had been gradually abandoned in the Shunzhi and early Kangxi periods. The edict explained why the change was necessary:

> Recently Buddhist monks are too numerous and their classes muddled. Among the monks of the various provinces, those who sincerely become monks to seek the way are not one or two in a hundred, while ignorant vagabonds loaf and assemble to sponge on others and fugitive criminals hide away among them. Thus it is that Buddhists grow more numerous each day, but the law of the Buddha declines by the day.[67]

Henceforward, those who wished to become monks had first to obtain a license from local officials; only then would they be permitted to take the tonsure.[68]

Whether or not monks truly enjoyed special political power in the early Yongzheng period, it is clear that they appeared to at the time and that both the Yongzheng and Qianlong emperors were aware of this perception and worked assiduously to combat it. Both rulers publicly denied monks' influence on political matters and systematically confiscated calligraphy and writings that might enable a monk or monastery to boast of a special relationship with the throne. The Qianlong emperor was especially determined, initiating what amounted to a literary inquisition. His renewal of the licensing system, moreover, could only have made fraud more difficult. By the first year of the Qianlong reign, "emperor's monk" had become an extremely poor choice of identity for the would-be impostor.

The Qianlong emperor's policies with regard to monks exemplify his ruling style. Springing from the lessons of previous reigns and jealous regard for his own autocratic power and image, the emperor's licensing system and confiscation of imperial calligraphy also required significant mobilization of administrative resources. This concentration on authority and image, and willingness to mobilize the bureaucracy in their defense, would come to characterize his reign.[69]

Routine and Bureaucratic Politics

Both the Kangxi and Yongzheng emperors found it necessary to issue special edicts denying the use of secret agents and instructing provincial officials to detain and report anyone presenting himself as a princely or imperial emissary. I have found no such protest or instruction, however, from the Qianlong emperor. The closest thing to it was an edict of 1753 warning provincial officials to be on the lookout for bannermen presenting themselves as imperial clansmen (*zongshi*). Inasmuch as imperial clansmen had no business roaming outside the capital, the edict explained, anyone presenting himself as

such in the provinces must therefore be a fraud, and local officials should arrest him and inform their superiors.[70]

Provincial authorities dutifully forwarded the command to their subordinates, but the resulting investigations produced no great harvest. As the governor-general of Guangdong and Guangxi reported, fraud of this sort in the provinces usually involved claims to be an official or the relative or friend of one's superior. "Daring to claim [the status] of imperial clansman . . . , I have not yet heard of such a case."[71] Ultimately, only two suspects were netted. One turned out to be an authentic imperial clansman. Poor, illiterate, and depressed, he was returning from an unfulfilling pilgrimage to Mount Tai when local officials in Shandong spotted him in a temple, burning paper from a suspicious-looking package. He told them a stranger on the road had asked him to deliver the package to a postal relay station, but he had passed the place unknowingly and could not afford to go back.[72] The other case did involve fraud: a low-ranking imperial nobleman named Jingšeo (Ch. Jingshou) had a wet nurse whose unemployed son had taken to presenting himself as his underling.[73] On at least two occasions the young man had tried, in exchange for a previously agreed-upon share in the profits, to influence the outcome of a local dispute by going to the county yamen with a letter written in Jingšeo's name.[74] Neither of these men, one bold but petty and the other simply pathetic, constituted a wedge between throne and province.

Meng Guangzu availed himself of the late-Kangxi succession struggle and the distance that contest created between throne and provincial officialdom. Impostors in the Yongzheng period rode the wings of that ruler's religious predilections, the internecine struggle surrounding his accession, and the climate of secrecy that clouded his relationship with officials in the field. Qianlong-era impersonations tell a different story, their paucity and relative marginality speaking to a changed political environment.

The first half of the Qianlong period saw organizational growth and increasing administrative efficiency in a wide range of government activities, from warfare to river conservancy and famine relief.[75] From the outset, the establishment of a consolidated Grand Council also set the stage for routinization at the highest levels of decision-making in the inner court. Even the emperor himself came to play an increasingly bureaucratic role, his endorsements on most palace memorials limited to routine administrative phrases one to four characters in length.[76]

The monarch did not lose all ability to exercise personal and arbitrary authority. He continued to do so, chiefly by manipulating two institutions. One was the Grand Council, which he expanded into a high privy council that could circumvent and dominate the regular

bureaucracy and which he tried to control, even as its power grew and encroached on his autonomy, through his appointment and dismissal of councillors. The other was the palace memorial system, which he used on select occasions (typically ones involving politically sensitive criminal investigations) to prod and shame provincial governors into action.[77] Stern and frightening as these rescripts could be, however, they were still bureaucratic communications, not cloak-and-dagger maneuvering involving secret agents in the field. For this monarch, even the personal interventions came to assume a routine quality.

In this new, increasingly routinized environment, the genuineness of imperial agents ceased to be a matter of uncertainty for provincial officials. It was no longer credible, politically or procedurally, for a special agent to present himself in their midst without proper credentials. And where there was little doubt, there was little room for would-be frauds to insert themselves between throne and province. In other words, the Qianlong reign brought a shrinkage in the space available for high-level impersonation.

This did not mean that all was well at the top, however. Curiously, although the Fu Tianbao performance took place in the popular arena and far from the capital, it also reflected a new configuration of political power at the center. Fukang'an and his brothers were imperial in-laws who played critical roles not only in major military campaigns but also in the capital bureaucracy, and particularly on the Grand Council, the Qianlong emperor's key device for maintaining personal control over policymaking and government administration. Beatrice Bartlett has shown that over time the council's functions expanded to the point that it not only dominated the outer-court and provincial administrations but also limited the monarch's policy-making autonomy.[78] Recent scholarship has built on this analysis, describing a mid-Qianlong crisis in which the emperor faced the growing influence of two corrupt examination-based patronage networks centered on Chinese grand councillors. In response, beginning in the 1770s, he consciously introduced a group of Manchu intimates, many of whom were imperial in-laws who had started their careers as bodyguards, to counterbalance the existing factions.[79] In the years leading up to the Fu Tianbao imposture, Fukang'an and his brothers were members of this emerging "hyperfaction" or "Heshen clique."[80]

Whether or not Xia Yinglong was aware of these intricacies, or even of the Grand Council's existence, his choice for an object of imposture strikingly reflected the distinctive political environment of the late Qianlong period, when the monarch was elevating loyal intimates to help him control the inner court bureaucracy, pacify the frontiers, and suppress rebellions. Put another way, when a

mischievous commoner cast about for a powerful figure to impersonate in 1786, he found one whose place in the political system was quite different from that of the prince's men and secret agents of the Kangxi and Yongzheng eras. Fifty years on, the Qianlong emperor had created a new type of personage.

All of these impostures related, in one way or another, to the aforementioned problem of bureaucratic agency. The impostor complicated the ruler-bureaucrat relationship by mimicking the agent's role in pursuit of his own ends and, in the Kangxi and Yongzheng periods especially, by adding uncertainty to the mix. (Had the ruler, or a prince, really sent him or not?) The roles that impostors assumed also changed with developments in the political order, reflecting the fading away of certain types of actors and possibilities and the emergence of new ones. For the Qianlong period, inner court and monarchical routinization worked to eliminate the official uncertainty of previous reigns, spelling the end for secret agents. And in a final irony, the hunt for a phony agent could itself intensify the problem of agency. This was the case in both the Meng Guangzu and Fu Tianbao episodes. The former exposed the distance between the Kangxi emperor and his governors, only one of whom had reported Meng's existence, and led to new legal precedents governing official interaction with princes. In the Fu Tianbao episode the Qianlong emperor, in a manner reminiscent of his performance during the soul-stealing crisis eighteen years previously, used the event of Xia Yinglong's imposture to prod the northern governors into action and castigate them when they failed to catch the culprit quickly.[81]

IMPOSTURE AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The historical and institutional embeddedness of official impersonations in Qing China has parallels in other societies. Two examples, a celebrated incident from early twentieth-century Germany and a literary masterpiece from czarist Russia, serve to highlight how specific political environments are conducive to certain types of imposture.

Friedrich Wilhelm Voigt (1849–1922) was a habitual criminal and long-term convict who, posing as a Prussian military officer, successfully robbed the municipal government of the Berlin suburb of Köpenick in the fall of 1906. He diverted ten soldiers from the streets of Berlin (four of them straight from the hands of their commanding officer), took them to Köpenick on a train, posted several as guards at the municipal council offices and, once inside, arrested two high officials, rebuked a sleepy police inspector, and confiscated four thousand marks from the cash box. After ordering the guards to escort the prisoners to Berlin, he made his escape with the money. It took the authorities six weeks to track him down.[82]

From the very beginning, observers in Germany and abroad saw this episode as a commentary on the blind obedience associated with Prussian militarism. Voigt had claimed to be acting on orders from the king, but the key to his success was the officer's uniform. He had chosen the perfect role for his time: Prussian military officer in the decades after the unification of 1871, when the army enjoyed growing prestige and "wove itself more deeply into the fabric of everyday life" across Germany. As Christopher Clark observes, not all Germans approved of this militarization of society, but everyone could recognize it as the background for Voigt's escapade. The impostor was not an intimidating man, but the authority and prestige associated with the uniform (which he had pieced together from secondhand stores) rendered his victims helpless. Whether awful, laughable, or both, Voigt's scheme and its success were perfectly understandable in the context of post-unification Germany.[83]

It was equally logical that when conceiving his mistaken-identity satire *The Inspector General*, Nikolai Gogol (1809–52) chose as the persona the other characters would fall for not a military man but a government inspector. The play unfolds in a provincial town where the local notables mistake Khlestakov, a minor government clerk from the capital, for a secret high-level inspector dispatched by the czar. Khlestakov is "scatter-brained" and slow to realize what has happened, but he is also ridiculously self-important, and as a parade of dignitaries fawn over him, offer bribes, and try to fathom his intentions he instinctively rises to the occasion and takes advantage of his dumb luck.

An oblivious petty clerk being mistaken for an imperial inspector was no less absurd than a lowly ex-convict posing as a military officer —but, just as the Köpenick incident reflected the special character of post-unification German society, so was *The Inspector General* grounded in the particular institutional setting of early nineteenth-century Russia. Gogol wrote the play in 1835, ten years after the Decembrist revolt, a time when a deeply suspicious and autocratic Czar Nicholas I (r. 1825–55) had greatly expanded surveillance, inspection, and secret police establishments across the empire.[84] These sprawling intelligence-gathering operations did include secret inspectors traveling incognito in the provinces, and there were actual cases of imposture and mistaken identity. There is strong evidence, moreover, that specific incidents may have provided inspiration for the play. Gogol wanted to write a comedy and had specifically asked his friend Pushkin for "an authentically Russian anecdote." Pushkin seems to have responded with at least two, one involving an impostor posing as a ministry official and another an incident in which a provincial governor mistook the poet himself for an inspector

travelling incognito. Years later Gogol told a friend that in addition to Pushkin's anecdotes he had also learned of other, similar impostures.[85]

Whatever the specific inspirations, Gogol intended his play to ring true. The subject was the corruption and unprofessionalism for which provincial officials were notorious. The characters, the dialog, and even the wardrobes were meant to be authentic—in conscious departure from the vaudevillian farces dominating Russian comedy at the time.[86] The playwright was lampooning the realities of provincial government.

Probing more deeply, the semiotician Iurii Lotman read Khlestakov as a sublime reflection of psychological and behaviorial patterns specific to the early nineteenth century, brilliantly captured by the playwright from the larger symbolic system of Russian culture and history after Peter the Great (r. 1682–1725). Exploring both historical examples and the literary character to identify elements of that system, Lotman described an age in which men of ambition used lies and flights of fancy to bridge the gap between career ideals and realities, in which the ideal of career advancement through social status or merit was belied by the reality of imperial favor as a necessary ingredient; a man who lacked regular credentials but somehow gained the ruler's personal favor could be catapulted to high position. As a result, imperial favor became an object of pursuit for the ambitious and a lever of power for those who obtained it. In such an environment even fools could entertain visions of grandeur, and people of real merit and standing defer to them.[87]

I would not go so far as to posit a grand semiotic structure for Qing China and assume that we can use fraud cases to decode it. Impostors and their schemes were embedded in specific historical and institutional environments, however, and for a performance to succeed it could not stray too far from its context. It had to make sense; not perfect sense in a complete symbolic system, but enough to be plausible at a given moment. At some level the impostor had to play upon reality.

Impersonation in Qing China reflected changing political realities. In the last years of the Kangxi reign, uncertainty stemming from the succession struggle left provincial officials hedging their bets and thus vulnerable to abuse by princes' agents, both genuine and bogus. Officials were doubly vulnerable during the succeeding reign because princes still figured prominently in the political scene for a time, while the unpredictable methods of the increasingly powerful emperor kept them in doubt with regard to his own use of secret agents. The Qianlong emperor inherited a more stable throne, and his struggles with the bureaucracy were of a different sort. With the nobility politically enfeebled and the emperor playing an increasingly

routinized role as a bureaucratic monarch (even as he tried to control the bureaucracy), there was less room for ambiguity or doubt when it came to his or a prince's use of secret agents. Such high-level impersonations all but disappeared.

More mundane impostures, on the other hand, did not fade away, and there was no good reason that they should. Phony princely and imperial agents exploited gray areas associated with privy power at the royal and aristocratic level. Below them, the typical impostor or forger exploited a different kind of space, created in many cases by the nature of everyday government administration in the provinces. Meng Guangzu and his like played on political uncertainty within the ruling apparatus, whereas humbler frauds played on popular knowledge and ignorance of official procedures.

CHAPTER 3

“En Route to My Post” and Other Tall Tales: Phony Officials on the Move

Because I couldn’t make a living at home I started drifting from place to place. If I’d said I was a licentiate, I should have had to go hungry;
but when I said I was in the Patent Office, the merchants and local gentry were willing to help me.
—The impostor Wan Li, in *The Scholars*

UNOFFICIAL HISTORIES (*YESHI*) OF THE QING PERIOD CONTAIN the colorful story of a bandit who became, for a time, a successful magistrate.[1] The story begins with a newly appointed prefect named Guo being murdered by highway robbers en route to his post at Chizhou, Anhui, in the early 1660s.[2] The bandits massacre Guo’s entourage, sparing only his wife and young son. In the baggage they find the prefect’s certificate of office and, proceeding to Chizhou with the whole gang in tow, the leader reports for duty in the dead man’s place. He proves to be a talented administrator, winning the praises of superiors and subordinates alike. Strangely, however, he does not forward tax revenues to the provincial seat. When queried on this point, he responds: “With so important a matter as taxes, I must deliver them personally, but cannot be going back and forth for each payment. I will deliver them as soon as they are all paid. If you do not believe me, just send an underling to take inventory.” His superior does send an inspector, who finds that the storehouse is indeed filling up with money and grain. The superior is much pleased.

Meanwhile, whenever one of the deceased prefect’s relatives comes to visit him the bandits lure the kinsman into the yamen and kill him. None escape until a brother-in-law who has come to investigate catches sight of the prefect in his carriage and realizes he is an impostor. Posing as a water bearer, he gets inside the yamen compound and finds his sister, the murdered official’s wife, who tells him what has happened and warns that there are more than thirty bandits. Informed of these shocking circumstances, the prefect’s superior devises a ruse of his own to catch the brigands unawares. Learning that many of them are talented accountants, he confides to the phony prefect that, “In the various counties the taxes are unclear. I hear that there are many talented men in your yamen. Could you spare a few to tote them all up?” The bandit heartily agrees and dispatches two men to each county, where they are promptly jailed. His forces thus depleted, he is summoned on another pretext and arrested. By this time there are 80,000 ounces of silver in the

prefectural storehouse, and the bandit confesses he had been planning to disappear with all of it at the end of the month.

This story was almost certainly apocryphal, but like many good tales it was constructed from pieces of reality. One version specifies the year as 1664.[3] Chizhou did get a prefect surnamed Guo that year, but he reached the post safely. Guo Shichun was a native of Jinjiang County, Fujian. A short biography in the Jinjiang history notes that after being posted to Chizhou his "administration was strict and clear, and treacherous clerks feared him." There is no information on his departure, but the next magistrate listed in the prefectural history arrived seven years later.[4]

Guo was a prominent surname in Jinjiang, and the county history contains another biography that comes a little closer to the tale of the bandit prefect. In the 1640s, a man named Guo Wei was assigned to a circuit post in Guangdong. He "did not submit when he encountered bandits, and the bandits respected him as a good official. Subsequently he died of illness." In addition, Guo Wei had a brother who died in office as magistrate of Maoming County, Sichuan, and a son who was magistrate of Shimen County, Hunan, and left the post due to illness.[5] Both served in the 1660s, at the same time as the Chizhou prefect. Thus, the "bandit prefect" tale may have combined elements of two or more careers. Whatever the case, it takes a decidedly fanciful turn when an outlaw takes the official's place.

In addition to the biographies that inspired it, the story also plays cleverly upon two institutional realities. One was the simple fact that in order to enter a yamen and take up a post, one had to have the proper credentials. How, then, could bandits occupy a yamen quietly? They could get ahold of the credentials and transform themselves into officials. This played smoothly into the second reality, the close connection between officeholding and the amassing of silver. There is a sly undertone of affinity between greedy bandits who become financial experts and admiring officials who watch the silver piling up and borrow bandit talent to "clear" the accounts in neighboring jurisdictions. Although far-fetched, these elements of the story do reflect the widely acknowledged connection between officeholding and wealth, and a common perception that robbers and corrupt officials were cast from the same mold.

As it happened, silver also lay at the heart of most official imposture cases in the actual criminal record. Of the thirty I have examined, at least twenty-three were perpetrated for material gain. Imposture was chiefly a path to money.[6] At the same time, different impostures unfolded in diverse circumstances and, like the bandit who replaced Prefect Guo, protagonists had to shape their identities and performances to reflect institutional realities.

In the real world of official impersonation there were three basic identities one could assume: the official in his yamen, the appointee en route to his post or dispatched to await the next available vacancy, and the deputy on a special mission. The impostor who actually crossed a yamen threshold (before his arrest) was extremely rare. I have found only two such cases, in both of which the poser assumed the identity of a recent appointee who had died before he could report for duty.[7] Another impostor planned to proceed to a minor post in Shanxi in his father's name, but was exposed when he applied for the requisite reporting-for-duty documents in his home province.[8] In a fourth case a man named Tong Rude bought a forged identity certificate and reported for duty as a county jailor in Zhejiang, but judging from extant records he did not actually take up the post before being arrested.[9]

It is no coincidence that three of these cases involved the lowly positions of county jailor (*dianshi*), an unranked subofficial functionary;[10] or police chief (*xunjian*), who typically held the lowest official rank and worked out of a police office at some distance from the county seat.[11] In addition, one of the frauds posed as his own father and another may also have been impersonating a close relative. (Tong Rude took the place of a deceased official with the similar name Tong Rupeng.)[12] Thus, the posers avoided high-profile positions, opting for what looked like easier deceptions. Still, even these attempts were fraught with danger and difficulty.

In the Yamen

The two instances in which a fraud definitely got inside the yamen and assumed a post were short, pitiful affairs. In 1659, a Zhejiangese named Xu Rong posed as his deceased cousin and took up the registrar's post at Baoqing prefecture, Hunan.[13] However, as the censor who filed the report put it, "it is difficult for a malicious creature to conceal itself" (*guiyu nandun*). Xu managed to deceive the prefect when reporting for duty, but it so happened that three local officials had met his late relative, Xu Dan, and remembered what he looked like: tall and thin, with a smooth complexion. The new registrar, by contrast, was shorter and had pockmarks on his face. All three were certain that he was not the original man. In particular, the prefectural granary commissioner had spent a whole month with Xu Dan earlier in the year. They had traveled down the Grand Canal on the same boat from Beijing to Hangzhou, and when they parted Xu was so ill that he was spitting blood and could not speak.[14]

Called in for questioning, the registrar confessed that he was actually Xu Dan's cousin. The real registrar had died after returning from the capital with his appointment certificate. His brother, who

was heavily indebted, had then given the certificate to Xu Rong.[15] Xu accepted it either in lieu of repayment for debts owed him personally or to make up other arrears on the family's behalf.

The other in-yamen imposture took place seventy-five years later in Hubei, when a petty merchant named Zhu Sheng became a county jailor in place of the true appointee.[16] Zhu was an itinerant merchant from Huaining County, Anhui. Originally he had sold lumber for a living, but when that business failed he switched to the humbler occupation of selling soap. In September of 1735, having sold his stock and now looking for new business, he boarded a small boat in Wuhu County, in Taiping prefecture, Anhui, and sat on the deck. In the cabin was another passenger with two attendants. He invited Zhu inside and introduced himself as Shen Lan, the newly appointed prefectural registrar (*jingli*). As it was still too early to report for duty, he had gone to visit relatives in Hubei. Zhu didn't believe the man at first, but he brought out an official appointments register (*jinshen*) and a selection record (*xuandan*). Sure enough, there was the name Shen Lan.

With that, Zhu respectfully addressed the man as "Venerable Sir" (Laoye) and, ever on the lookout for opportunities, asked if Shen could send any his way.[17] "I see that you are a good man, and literate, too," Shen observed, and he invited Zhu to share his meal. It just so happened, he said, that there was an opportunity for Zhu to "become respectable and wealthy overnight" (*yishi gaogui*). Yao Weijun, the newly appointed jailor for Huanggang County, the seat of Huangzhou prefecture in neighboring Hubei, had fallen ill and passed away before he could reach his post. As he lay dying in Gaoyou department, on the Grand Canal in Jiangsu, he had entrusted his certificate of appointment (*wenping*) to Shen Lan, who now offered to sell it to Zhu Sheng.[18] Since Yao had not reported for duty, local officials would be expecting him but not know what he looked like; Zhu could assume the deceased jailor's identity and thereby obtain an official position.

Zhu hesitated at first. Shen had told him the certificate was worth some three hundred ounces of silver, a large sum. Even in his better days as a lumber merchant, Zhu had only possessed a few dozen ounces in capital. There was, moreover, no guarantee the impersonation would succeed. Shen brought the matter up again the next day, however, and assuaged Zhu's concerns about the money. He would accept a small fee for now and take another hundred ounces or so later, when Zhu was ensconced in the position. Zhu agreed, giving Shen four ounces of silver and nine cash. Then, Zhu's confession relates:

> He gave me the certificate of appointment and also said that, to report for duty one needs a career record [*lüli*], and he wrote

> one out for me; and that one should also first send a notification [*yutie*], and he wrote up a reporting-for-duty notification and gave it to me. He told me that once I had arrived at the post I should make my report by following what was in the career record.

The next day, Zhu's benefactor went his own way on another boat.

Zhu Sheng, still doubtful that the opportunity was real, continued on to Hubei to see what he could learn. At Huanggang, he learned that there was indeed a Jailor Yao who had not yet reported for duty. This was encouraging, but Zhu decided to go home to Anhui first, to get proper attire. On the way he met a cloth merchant named Ji Xiangwan, and told him he was a county jailor reporting to his post but short on money. Ji, hoping to gain a position on the jailor's staff, lent Zhu two ounces of silver and six cash. Together they went to Wuchang, where Zhu bought a gown, coat, boots, and a hat. Thus attired and with Ji in tow, he reported for duty as Yao Weijun, presenting his certificate of appointment to the Huanggang magistrate and reciting the resumé Shen had written for him, right down to the part about his arrival being delayed by storms. The unsuspecting magistrate accepted the explanation, the certificate, and the copy of "Yao's" resumé, forwarding them to the prefect with his report that the new jailor had arrived.

Zhu took up residence in the county yamen compound, but the initial boldness quickly gave way to unease, and his worried countenance made his attendant suspicious. Ji pressed him with all sorts of questions, and Zhu finally told him the truth. The attendant demanded his money back, threatening to expose the phony official if he did not pay up. Zhu managed to buy his silence with three ounces of silver, and Ji made a hasty departure after staying at the yamen for only three days. Meanwhile, an oblivious Huangzhou prefect forwarded "Yao's" credentials to the provincial capital without question. There, at the administration commissioner's yamen, the forgeries were immediately detected and an order went out for "Yao's" arrest. Zhu Sheng promptly confessed.

On the Way

Zhu Sheng's misadventure is the closest thing to the bandit prefect tale that I have encountered in the official record. Most official impersonations were far more mundane and circumspect. Impostors assumed all kinds of useful identities in Qing China, but almost never as an official *in his yamen*. As the short and unhappy careers of Xu Rong and Zhu Sheng suggest, such a performance was simply too difficult to carry off. But the benefits of title and office were attractive, and many impostors chose official identities *outside* the yamen. Thus, case records feature an assortment of expectants, new appointees

traveling to their posts, and deputies on special missions.

Expectant (*houbu* or *houxuan*; literally, "awaiting appointment" or "awaiting selection") was the identity of choice, because it carried official rank and prestige without tying the holder down to a yamen or even a specific geographic location. Moving up in the ranks or on the threshold of an official career but not yet active in government administration, the expectant could be in the capital, at home in the provinces, or traveling in between. The impostor could also hope to enjoy relative anonymity in the sea of early-career officials, benefitting from the status but not burdened by the dangers of posing as a well-known personage. Twelve phony expectant cases include those of Zhong Xiaoni, a Jiangxi native who posed as an expectant circuit official under imperial orders to assist in the inspection of grain stores in Fujian; Shou Lunyuan, who pretended to be an expectant Grand Canal vice-prefect (Nanhe tongzhi) and fooled the Hunan provincial administration commissioner into ordering local officials to cooperate with his lumber acquisitions; and Dang Linhan, who went to Hangzhou to swindle, posting a sign outside his rented quarters to attract victims. It read, "Residence of Expectant Provincial Administration Commission Registrar Dang."[19]

A newly assigned regular official did not enjoy the wide geographic mobility of an expectant, but he did have to travel to reach his yamen. This created opportunities for frauds who could pose as recent appointees passing through (*guolu*) on the way to their posts. Such was the case with Shen Zhouqi, a wandering beggar, street performer, and calligraphy seller who fooled a kind Anhui family into taking him in for several months by telling them he was the new magistrate of Runing Prefecture, Henan, on the way to his post.[20]

Other phonies allegedly traveling to their posts included a vice-prefect, a county magistrate, a high-level secretary at the Court of Colonial Affairs, and a registrar—none other than Zhu Sheng's benefactor, Shen Lan.[21] When arrested for impersonating the jailor Yao Weijun, Zhu confessed that he had acquired the credentials from Shen Lan, the newly appointed registrar of Taiping prefecture in Anhui. When Anhui authorities were asked to interrogate Shen Lan, the Taiping prefect reported that his new registrar had not yet reported for duty. Then, six weeks later, Shen appeared on the docks at Taiping with his family and entourage. Before the prefect could send runners to detain him, the man dutifully presented himself at the yamen and submitted his career record.

Under close questioning, Shen steadfastly denied knowing the deceased jailor or Zhu Sheng and selling documents, forged or otherwise. He could not have been in Anhui at the time of the transaction, moreover, as he had spent the entire summer in Beijing

awaiting appointment. The prefect was skeptical: "You don't know Yao Weijun and you don't know Zhu Sheng either. And this Zhu Sheng didn't name anyone else; he just falsely accused you, for no reason?" Shen was adamant, however, and evidence subsequently obtained from witnesses, guarantors, and official records from the Board of Civil Appointments proved that he was telling the truth. In addition, the prefect noted, Shen's physical appearance did not match the description Zhu Sheng had provided in Hubei. Zhu had described a man in his sixties with a beard and bushy eyebrows hanging down over his eyes; Shen was much younger and, like Xu Rong before him, had obvious pockmarks on his face.

After the authorities in Hubei received this information, an irritated county magistrate confronted Zhu Sheng with the Taiping prefect's description of his registrar:

> Shen Lan's face is all pockmarked. He doesn't have long eyebrows or a beard, either. He's only forty-one *sui*, and his attendants . . . are not surnamed Chen. All this is completely at odds with what you have said. . . . If you still won't tell the truth, we'll use the boards.[22]

Zhu did not change his story, however, and Hubei officials gradually came to agree that, while there was a new registrar named Shen Lan in Anhui, he was not the same man who had forged documents and encouraged Zhu Sheng to impersonate the dead jailor in Hubei. That "Shen Lan," obviously an impostor himself, had disappeared in the river traffic with Zhu's meager soap profits. The record ends there, with the phony registrar still at large and nameless, identified only as a scoundrel (*guntu*) who was over sixty and bearded, with bushy eyebrows.

Special Deputy

Although easier and more common than taking someone's post inside a yamen, assuming the role of appointee on the road still had its limitations. One could not stray too far from the logical route of transit without arousing suspicion, and there were prescribed limits for timely arrival at the alleged destination. An easier alternative for some was the third basic persona, the ad hoc deputy on a special outside mission. This could be a probationery (*shiyong*) official assigned to a specific task in the field, or a detached (*waiwei*) or supernumerary (*ewai*) military officer appointed by the provincial or regional military commander.[23] These missions were reminiscent of the errands of phony secret agents supposedly sent by the emperor or a prince, but here the protagonists claimed to be minor officials dispatched by provincial authorities. Among impostors, the military deputy may have been more common than the civil probationer. In one example, a laborer posed as a squad leader detached to search the

villages of non-Han peoples in Yongshan County, Yunnan.[24] In another case, in 1748, a grateful regional commander in Gansu gave a company commander (*qianzong*) title to a merchant who had lent him 300 ounces of silver, and the following year he gave another to the merchant's cousin in exchange for 50 ounces of silver. Fifteen years later, long after the regional commander's retirement and death, the two merchants were caught wearing official hats and claiming to be company commanders.[25]

STORIES AND RESOURCES

Imposture entailed performance, be it donning a costume and looking important or simply telling a convincing story. The latter was especially important when the alleged official looked out of place, as when he appeared with no credentials, regalia, or attendants. The criminal record thus contains a plethora of stories, excuses, and supporting props, all woven together to cover deficiencies and present a facade of authenticity. These fictions and symbols sprang from whatever knowledge and experience the impostor possessed and were tested by the corresponding knowledge and experience of his intended victims.

Narratives and Devices

When a phony official approached a yamen, shop, or private home, or struck up a conversation on the street, at an inn or teahouse, or on a boat (or better yet, had an attendant do it for him to set the stage for the next phase of the deception), his performance had to be sufficiently convincing to bring on the desired results, which were typically some combination of food, lodging, clothing, money, or connections. To this end, impostors often spun stories using certain narrative devices to inspire admiration, evoke sympathy, or stoke a victim's own pecuniary or official ambitions. Common ploys included appeals to native-place or exam-year sentiment, sad stories of mishaps on the road, self-identification as the scion of a famous or powerful family, and the promise of substantial rewards for helping a wealthy and influential personage in need. Virtually all of these are present in two cases from the middle of the Qianlong period, the separate adventures of Shen Zhouqi and Luo Fenpeng.

Shen Zhouqi, the man who pretended to be the Runing prefect, was a struggling handicrafter from Hukou, Jiangxi.[26] He took to the road in 1770 and spent the next four years as a drifter, begging and writing calligraphy couplets for "ignorant country people." One day in October of 1775 in Dongliu County, Anhui, he fell ill and lay down in a doorway to sleep. It was the home of a man named Wang Anlan, whose mother took pity on the sick man and brought him inside, feeding him and allowing him to spend the night. When Wang Anlan came home, he observed that the man did not look like a beggar and

politely asked where he was from.

This was Shen Zhouqi's opportunity, and he made the most of it, inventing a story aimed to win favor and money. He told Wang that he was a bannerman named "Fuweilie," the third son of the late Grand Secretary, Fuheng.[27] Formerly an official in Taiwan, he had been promoted to magistrate of Runing prefecture, Henan, and was proceeding to the new post when his boat capsized on the Yangzi. He had lost all his baggage and his servants as well. Wang and his mother fell for Shen's story and kept him on while he recuperated, even giving him new clothing. After his recovery, "Fuweilie" wrote out a couplet for his hosts, who were even more impressed when he told them that he had been invited to advise the emperor (*shangyao tianting*). Word spread and soon other villagers were visiting with paper in hand, asking the distinguished guest to write couplets and treating him to food and wine in return. Eventually "Fuweilie" asked Wang Anlan to lend him some money for traveling expenses so that he could "return to the capital." He promised to secure him an official post, and Wang was canvassing relatives for the money when the local authorities caught wind of it and arrested him. With that, "Fuweilie's" adventure came to an abrupt end, five months after he had lain down in Wang's doorway.

This drifter's story combined several winning elements to produce an overall effect that made him an honored guest, the toast of the town, well treated with free food, wine, and lodging for the better part of five months. Genuine illness seems to have gotten him inside Wang Anlan's house, but the rest was invented so that he could stay there. First was the revelation of his identity: "Fuweilie," a name he invented, was a prefect, an important official appointee. More than that, he was a Manchu and scion of the prominent Fuca clan. In this respect Shen was a decade ahead of Xia Yinglong's fictional "Fu Tianbao," although Fuweilie's story did not seem to correspond with any particulars of the Fuca siblings' careers.[28] Shen may simply have been lucky to get away with it, or perhaps in a quiet southern county one Fu from the capital was as good as another.

From a narrative standpoint, something had to bridge the gap between these grandiose claims and the awkward fact that Shen was a vagrant who had been found sick at the gate to a private home in Anhui. He explained his presence in Anhui with the simple tale of being an appointee in transit from Taiwan to Henan. This made geographic sense; on a map it was a straight shot to Runing, passing right through Anhui. But why did he turn up on a doorstep like a stray dog? Heaven, or fate, provided the answer: the river was cruel, and even the scion of a great family could find himself in distress.

Finally, with the hosts duly impressed and sympathetic, it only

remained to prolong their hospitality. Shen did this by becoming a celebrity and holding out the promise of rewards for Wang Anlan. The illustrious guest and parade of well-wishers no doubt enhanced Wang's status in the community, and when Shen began to eye the road again he spoke of securing Wang an official post once he got back to Beijing. All he needed was the money to get there.

Luo Fenpeng was an educated but unsuccessful man. A native of Ji'an Prefecture, Jiangxi, he had been a teacher, if the assertion in his confession is to be believed.[29] The work does not seem to have supported his needs, however, for he was twice punished by the local magistrate for theft. In 1759, at the age of 34 *sui*, he left his family and took to the road, roaming through Hunan, Hubei, and Henan and selling calligraphy as he went. Toward the end of 1761, he heard that the Qianlong emperor was conducting a southern tour and decided to go and see. Arriving in the great commercial center of Yangzhou and seeing that the place was thriving, he began what would become an extended swindle-financed vacation in the great cities of Jiangnan: three months in Yangzhou, three more in Hangzhou, and another four in Nanjing.

Upon arrival in each city Luo would seek out merchants from his home province of Jiangxi and manipulate native-place sentiment to sell them calligraphy samples and extract various loans and gifts. Co-provincials put him up in shops and temples, provided food and clothing, lent him silver, and introduced him to friends and associates who provided more loans. One man even served as matchmaker so that Luo could acquire a concubine.

All of this largesse flowed from Luo's deft manipulation of native-place sentiment and alleged official status. Always targeting co-provincials, he used fictitious names to introduce himself as the scion of prominent Jiangxi families. To explain his mundane appearance and lack of baggage, he began, like Shen Zhouqi, with a boating accident on the Yangzi. The river was a convenient backdrop for a tale of woe, its menacing waters just waiting to capsize phantom boats and swallow or disperse nonexistent baggage, and both men used it to good effect.[30] It also appears that everyone knew how difficult it was to find good help in the middle Qianlong years; in Nanjing Luo invited sympathy by relating how his servant had absconded with his baggage, leaving him stranded.

As his journey continued, Luo assumed ever more respectable identities, quite outlandish by the end but not so extreme as to be unbelievable. He started as an honorary vice-prefect and then he became an honorary prefect. Such titles were obtained through financial contributions to the dynastic cause and would have reinforced the impression that Luo was a man of means. Ultimately, as

he worked his way north again in 1763, he became a full prefect who had greeted the emperor during the recent southern tour, been granted an audience, and received a promotion, titles, and gifts of official regalia. Thus, like Shen Zhouqi, Luo polished his official persona with proximity to the Son of Heaven. Unlike Shen, who seemed to be working a less sophisticated audience, Luo felt constrained to back his claims up with physical evidence in the form of a list of his alleged honors.

Luo Fenpeng invented plausible identities grounded in familiar contexts. A humble literatus playing a respectable scholar-bureaucrat, he used his classical education and calligraphic skills to strike convincing poses, enjoying lengthy stays in fabled places but always moving on when the money and free accommodations showed signs of drying up. All the while he was living a dream, moving from poor scholar to expectant and then retired official, engaging in the literati tradition of sharing calligraphy and mimicking the celebratory exchanges that took place between provincial scholars and the emperor in the course of the southern tours.[31]

In the end, Luo came to official attention only when he got caught up in a gambling bust at an inn and, in a moment of panic, donned his official cap and told the investigating magistrate that he was an expectant prefect. If not for this unhappy accident, it is quite possible that officials in six provinces, to say nothing of the emperor and ourselves, would never have heard of him. He escaped from detention and was finally apprehended not by government runners but by one of his many dupes, who chased him down nine miles outside the Wuning County seat in Jiangxi. By then Luo was quite close to home again and may have been preparing to resume his original identity and return to "instructing the young." In light of his sprawling three-year adventure, one is left to wonder how many other impostors roamed the towns and countryside without ever getting caught.

Identity through Colored Glass

The official masquerade often included costume and props. To announce and reinforce their (false) identities, most impostors employed a tangible marker of official rank: the official's cap. Officials were subject to extensive regulations governing their outward appearance. Board of Rites specifications covered fine gradations of clothing (including material, design, color, and insignia), headwear, accouterments, and, where applicable, sedans and retinues for every rank and occasion.[32] Many frauds used one or more of these status markers, but the most common by far was headwear. In everyday settings, when the special wardrobes of court audience or other ceremonial occasions were not required, the garb was simple and the main indication of rank was the knob or globule (*dingdai, dingzi*) fixed

atop the official cap. Each of the nine basic ranks had its corresponding hat knob, distinguishable by its color.[33] (See table 1.) Whether at a yamen or on the street, one could instantly tell a man's rank with a glance at his hat.

Judging from the archival record, hat knobs were fairly easy to come by. At least twenty-two (more than two-thirds) of the thirty phony officials I have encountered used them. One or two were borrowed, but fourteen of the posers bought theirs, and at least three did so at simple street stalls (*tan*) rather than formal shops.[34] Luo Fenpeng bought *three* knobs in the course of his travels, throwing them away when he left a city and took to the road again. Such ease of acquisition suggests the presence of a ready market, at least in prefectural seats and busy commercial centers. In addition to regular officials, legitimate purchasers would have included *jiansheng* (Imperial College[35] students), other members of the gentry, and certain veteran yamen clerks who had gained low official status through a special provincial examination. On the illicit side were clerks and runners who were not eligible to wear official hats but did so, anyway.[36] As for cost, the typical hat knob was probably not very expensive. After 1730, colored glass generally replaced the original precious stones.[37]

TABLE 1. Qing Dynasty Hat Knob Rank Designations

HAT KNOB	RANK
Ruby *hongbaoshi*	1
Red coral *shanhuding*	2
Transparent blue (sapphire) *lanbaoshi*	3
Dead blue (azure) *qingjinshi*	4
Crystal (transparent white) *shuijingding*	5
Opaque white *chequding*	6
Golden *sujinding*	7
Gilded *loujinding*	8
Silvered *louyinding*	9

Sources: Brunnert and Hagelstrom, *Present Day Political Organization of China*, no. 966; *Qingshi gao*, 1: 826 (*juan* 103, pp. 3055–57).

Identity through the White Pages

The anonymous trickster who sold forged identity papers and disappeared with the soap merchant Zhu Sheng's money obviously possessed considerable knowledge of the official world. He knew that a newly appointed county jailor named Yao Weijun would not be arriving at his post in Hubei, and that a registrar named Shen Lan, whose identity he momentarily usurped, was en route to his in Anhui. He had on his person a forged certificate of appointment, supposedly given him by the mortally ill Yao Weijun, and he drew up a phony career record and duty notification before Zhu Sheng's eyes.

How did the mysterious stranger come by all this information? To prove his identity to the suspicious Zhu Sheng, the phony Shen Lan had shown him a *jinshen*, a register or directory of official appointments. Issued seasonally by the Board of Civil Appointments, the *jinshen* (or *jinshen lu*) was also copied and sold in expanded editions by private printers and bookshops throughout the Qing period.[38] The official registers listed newly appointed civil officials of all ranks, in both the capital and the provinces, by title and rank, name, native place, and dates of appointment and examination degree.[39] Privately printed versions, generally cheap "sleeve" editions sold in bookshops, often included lists of military officials as well, and supplementary information on such things as courier station routes, time limits for reporting to duty, and the proper etiquette to be observed when officials of various ranks met.[40] Some even included provincial maps.[41] Appointments registers were readily available in the capital, and presumably would have traveled with their owners out to the provinces. More significantly, their existence suggests that detailed information about current officialdom—who was whom, serving where, and so on—was widely available in the Qing period.[42]

The register of appointments would have been a useful resource for recent appointees heading for their posts. It was also a valuable source of information on current officialdom in general, and the phony registrar made good use of it, picking out a new identity from the sea of names and background information. The detailed information on Yao Weijun—name, native place, year of attaining the examination degree, schedule for reporting for duty, and so on—further enabled the anonymous trickster to forge Yao's credentials and reconstruct his resumé.

The appointments register was a common resource in official and literati life, even appearing in drama and fiction. In scene fifteen (*yingjia*) of *The Peach Blossom Fan*, Ma Shiying and Ruan Dacheng use one to bolster their petition in support of Prince Fu's succession to the Ming throne:

> MA: How can we make our list of names more impressive?
>
> RUAN: That's easy enough. We can procure an appointments register and copy all the names. . . .
>
> SECRETARY [entering with the directory]: Here's the detailed register published by Hong's Bookstore on West Riverbank.[43]

In scene seven of Li Yu's (1601–c.1680) play *The Jade Clasp* (Yu saotou) the second comic laughs, "I've never seen or heard of this official title. I ask you, what appointments register does it appear in?"[44] And in chapter twenty-two of Wu Jingzi's (1701–54) satirical novel *The Scholars*, the rascal Niu Pulang makes use of an appointments register lying on the counter at Guo Tiebi's seal-carving

shop in Wuhu (the very county where Zhu Sheng met the phony Shen Lan in 1735). “When Niu Pu opened it up for a look, he saw that Dong Ying of Renhe County, Zhejiang, had been appointed magistrate of Andong County in Huai’an Prefecture.”[45]

The appointments register was Heaven’s gift to impostors. Anyone with the requisite literacy and the money to buy, or the chance to peruse, one could acquaint himself with the names and backgrounds of official appointees throughout the empire. Such information could be used to target potential victims or inspire outright identity theft. In 1824, for example, a poor scholar named Chen Pei was walking from Beijing to Henan in search of a relative. Running out of cash while still in Zhili, he decided to pose as an official and visit a yamen to “borrow” some money. Arriving in the Daming prefectural seat, he feared that if he went to the prefect or county magistrate he would be questioned and exposed. It would be safer to try the circuit intendant’s yamen, a busier place where the presiding official would no doubt be less willing to receive guests. All Chen needed was a minor personal connection that would prompt the intendant’s largesse. For this he consulted an appointments register that he had brought along, first learning that the intendant had obtained his *jinshi* degree in 1799 and then looking for another official of the same examination class. He found one in a junior compiler at the Hanlin Academy. Armed with this information, Chen drew up a calling card in the name of the compiler’s fictitious brother and prepared to visit the circuit yamen, calculating that the intendant would decline to see him but be sufficiently moved by the classmate connection to give him some silver.[46]

In another instance in 1780, a fortune-teller named Wang Puru consulted an appointments register for the express purpose of finding an official he could impersonate. He chose the newly appointed magistrate of Xiuning County, Anhui. Taking up quarters in Hangzhou, which was thick with sojourning merchants from Anhui, Wang posted a sign advertising himself as the new Xiuning magistrate en route to his post. This would attract Anhui merchants to come pay their respects, he predicted, and he could graciously accept their gifts.[47] As for the phony Shen Lan, he evidently double-dipped in an appointments register, appropriating one identity for himself and selling another to Zhu Sheng.

The Culture of the Calling Card

Frauds who tried to deceive officials ran greater risks than those who sought only to cheat merchants, farmers, or other common people. When the cash-strapped traveler Chen Pei called at the Daming circuit yamen, for example, his hope and expectation was that the intendant would be too busy to receive him but not too stingy to dispense a gift

of silver. This was a dangerous game, and as luck would have it the intendant was not such a busy man, after all. To his consternation, Chen was admitted for an interview. He could not answer the intendant's questions and tried to beat a hasty retreat, not even daring to broach the subject of travel funds, but it was too late. The suspicious official handed him over to the county magistrate for interrogation.[48] Chen's calculations in targeting a busy circuit intendant rather than a comparatively idle county or prefectural magistrate, and his use of an appointments register to trace degree-year connections between officials, indicate some familiarity with government administration, examination culture, and guest ritual. His lack of preparation for an interview and his panic and clumsiness under interrogation, however, show that he was out of his element when it came to meeting officials face-to-face.

On the other hand, some aspects of official procedure could be facilitating. Since officials rotated in and out of positions frequently, it was not uncommon to see them on the roads and waterways proceeding from one post to another or to and from the capital. The rule of avoidance helped, too, as officials were expected to leave home and travel to other provinces.[49] Wardrobe and regalia requirements were lighter, moreover, for those on the road. Ad hoc postings and special assignments could explain a deputy or probationer's sudden appearance. Expectants enjoyed the greatest mobility of all, as they were not yet assigned to actual posts.

Many impostors also took advantage of a cherished traveler's institution: the courtesy call. Active officials faced not only their statutory responsibilities, but also a stream of visitors arriving at the yamen gates in the course of their travels: relatives, co-provincials, classmates, and minor officials en route to their postings, all of them expecting at least a small gift of silver to help them on their way. The "Entertaining Visitors" section of Huang Liuhong's handbook for magistrates contains this admonition:

> When a magistrate takes up his post, he enjoys a certain amount of emolument. Poor relatives, friends, or even distant acquaintances will naturally want to share some of his bounties. Furthermore, if the district is situated on a busy thoroughfare, many people who have recently obtained degrees will visit the magistrate on their journey to other destinations. When they present visiting cards to the magistrate's yamen, he is obliged to receive them with courtesy. If the visitor is a close friend or someone who had done favors for the magistrate, the welcome is naturally different from that for ordinary visitors. This is a popular tradition which the magistrate can ill afford to ignore.[50]

Huang went on to note the magistrate's specific obligations in these

encounters, including arranging for the visitor's lodging, holding an interview, and presenting him with a "gift of traveling expenses," the latter intended to hasten the man's departure. All of this treatment was to be measured out as a function of the guest's background and qualifications, on a scale of "upper, middle, and lower."[51]

In a memorial of 1728, the acting and assistant governors-general of Zhili noted the common problem of expectant officials and gentry sons and brothers (*zidi*), "not satisfied with their station" (*buan benfen*), calling at various provincial yamens and using the pretext of long-standing family connections to extract money (*choufeng*) from the presiding officials.[52] These observations were brought on by reports that in the space of a few days two county magistrates in Zhengding Prefecture, both surnamed Li, had been visited by a man named Li Guangzong. In each case he claimed to be an expectant Grand Secretariat (clerical) secretary (*zhongshu*) and nephew of a former capital official with close connections to the magistrates' families. First he visited the Huolu magistrate, claiming to be the nephew of Li Guangfu, former president of the Board of Works. The magistrate knew of no family connection, and Li retreated when he began questioning him. Then Li called on the Yuanshi magistrate, claiming to be the nephew of a former assistant commissioner in the Office of Transmission. The magistrate detained him to check his story.

Whether or not Li Guangzong was an official, it is not difficult to see how the system that Huang Liuhong had described a generation earlier could inspire artistic license in a courtesy caller's self-identification at the yamen gates, with strangers becoming relatives, co-provincials, classmates, and active or expectant officials. This elasticity, which also appeared in visits outside of the government apparatus, was facilitated by the physical distances separating travelers from their home environments and true identities. Close questioning and assessment of the visitor's true station through such telltale signs as wardrobe, speech, and deportment might screen out the obvious interloper, but beyond that the intended victim was at something of a disadvantage. In these situations, physical remove from one's normal social and institutional context freed the traveler from its constraints and facilitated misrepresentation. As a hapless vice-magistrate deposed after receiving the impostor Li Guofu in 1731, "Since [he] was a co-provincial from within 100 *li* [of my home county] and also claimed to be gentry, there was no reason to refuse."[53]

BEING SOMEONE IN THE HIGH AND LOW QING

Virtually all of the protagonists in these cases were literate, but in terms of career prospects they were either stuck or downwardly mobile. Among them were three dismissed officials: a county

magistrate cashiered for excessive use of judicial torture who was scheming to regain official status; and two former officers in the Green Standard armies, one a dismissed brigade commander who continued to wear his hat and peacock feather on the way to exile in Xinjiang, the other an assistant regional commander who pretended to be "on leave" when he went home—ten years after his dismissal.[54] These last two were impostors only in the sense that they kept up the pretense of now-lost status, but in the state's eyes there was little or no difference.

A few impostors came from families with some official background: the habitual swindler Shou Lunyuan was the son-in-law of a former prefect, the recidivist Lu Dengtai was the nephew and heir of a long-retired surveillance commissioner, and Zhao Rudong's father was a clerk who gained appointment as a police chief.[55] Most came from further down the social ladder, however. Zhong Xiaoni, who posed as an expectant circuit official, had been a calling-card writer at the home of a junior supervisor of the Household Administration of the Heir Apparent.[56] Fan Qiaonian, Wang Puru, and Cui San had all worked as fortune-tellers.[57] Luo Fenpeng was an unemployed teacher, Cai Yuanqing a horsegroom, and Gao Fake a onetime student, then doctor, and finally soldier.[58] Wang Chaosheng was a former monk turned laborer, and Li Ronghua was a laborer and mercenary who had been demobilized after the suppression of the White Lotus Rebellion (1796–1804).[59] Many of these men were drifters.

Why did they do it? Three common motivations emerge from the case records. First was a simple desire to make money. Second was the need for food, clothing, and accommodation on the road. Finally, there was in some cases an obvious desire for status and position, or at least the respectability that came with status. These motivations were not mutually exclusive. In fact, they were often closely intertwined. Status and position tended to lead to money, which is why most impostors chose to assume official identities to begin with. They also carried their holders into higher social and cultural communities, bringing both material comforts and prestige.

The adventures of Luo Fenpeng, for example, point to a set of issues revolving around the scholar-gentry and scholar-official society of Jiangnan, the economic and cultural heartland of late imperial China. This wealthiest part of the realm generated a disproportionately large share of examination degree holders and officials, and also sustained a thriving tradition of private academic and artistic activity. Learning was the road to office and wealth, and attainment as a scholar-official carried the greatest prestige, but the life of cultured leisure was an increasingly respectable and attractive alternative. And as a middle road between the two, the status attached to honorary titles was increasingly easy to buy.

All such attainments required means, however, and with the great population growth of the eighteenth century an ever-larger pool of scholars competed for a relatively stagnant number of degrees and official posts. Downward social mobility was a harsh fact of life. Luo Fenpeng, the phony prefect, was a part of this restless, frustrated, downwardly mobile population. Educated and possessing some talent as a calligrapher, a onetime teacher and perhaps regular examination failure, he was also poor, had resorted to stealing, and ultimately left his family to seek a better fortune.

Out on the road, Luo experimented with two lifestyles. For the first two years he crisscrossed the Hubei and Henan countryside, staying alive by selling bits of calligraphy and perhaps scribal services as well. Whether or not this was a fulfilling existence, news of the very special event of an imperial tour drew him to the coastal provinces of Jiangnan, and soon afterward he settled into a pattern of periodic imposture. The lies Luo began to tell were clearly rooted in the abovementioned ideals of rank, office, and the conferral of honors, which suggests that in his humble wanderings he had never completely forgotten the old dream of a scholar-official's success. Perhaps the excitement and spectacle of the emperor's southern tour, with its entertainments and gatherings of high officials and other prominent persons, rekindled in Luo a desire for a more refined existence. After his initial triumph in Yangzhou, the road grew bumpy again, and he found that even the relatively good life of living on other people's means required constant movement. His fictions, cleverly plausible at first, became fanciful in the end. In particular, his final tale of greeting, accompanying, and receiving honors from the Qianlong emperor far outdid the initial persona of an assistant-prefect-by-purchase temporarily separated from his money. Luo probably knew that such daydreams were the closest he could ever come to real success. Material needs aside, imposture was a way to bridge the chasm between harsh reality and the cherished ideals of cultured life, examination success, and government service. As the Jiangxi governor observed when recommending his immediate execution, Luo was a man who had "never been satisfied with his lot."[60]

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The tale of the bandit prefect was truly outlandish, and phony jailors were extreme rarities. The reality for most men who posed as actual officials was much closer to the plight of Licentiate Wan, who claimed he was a secretary in the capital bureaucracy in *The Scholars*. Wan's arrest at the beginning of an operatic performance and his subsequent rise to an actual official post may have been the stuff of dark comedy, but his explanation, quoted in the epigraph to this chapter, sprang from a bleak reality of the Qing period. Like many men who found

themselves on the road, he needed money, food, and lodging, and people of means were likely to provide these things to someone with an official title. When the quest for life's necessities grew desperate, some borrowed, others stole, and a few adopted a different course, assuming official identities to channel resources their way. There were few bandit prefects or phony jailors in eighteenth-century China, but Licentiate Wans abounded.

CHAPTER 4

Phony Cops: The Persistence of Police Impersonation

If I weren't really a constable, would I dare to arrest a thief?
—Dog Liu, phony constable

THE NIGHT BEFORE HE DIED IN OCTOBER OF 1802, WANYUN, abbot of the Vulture Peak Monastery (Jiufeng An) in Jingde County, Anhui, told a fellow monk that he had been accosted by three constables (*buyi*) who accused him of stealing some clothing. He had protested his innocence, but they threatened to take him before the magistrate and extract a confession unless he paid a fee of six thousand copper cash. A friend advanced four thousand on his behalf, and the constables released Wanyun under the condition that he come up with the rest. He had no means of doing so. The fellow monk, Shanghua, tried to console him, but later that night the distraught Wanyun hanged himself. Shanghua informed the authorities, and the three constables were soon arrested—but it turned out that they were not constables at all. They were common men, and the confrontation with Wanyun had been a masquerade.1

Based on the culprits' confessions and Shanghua's deposition, the magistrate's report reconstructed the events leading to Wanyun's death as follows: Cheng Kui and Cao Bin had formerly served as county constables. Cheng, who was in his sixties, had resigned two years previously due to illness, and Cao had recently been dismissed for failing to appear for roll call. The third man, a young cousin of Cheng's, was a manual laborer. On October 9, 1802, the three met and "got to talking about poverty" (*shuoqi pinqiong*). Cheng remarked that the monk Wanyun was wealthy and generous; if they posed as constables, they could accuse him of a crime and then extort some spending money. The others agreed, and as dusk approached Cheng stationed himself at a quiet spot beside a bridge while they went to fetch the monk.

They found him standing in front of the monastery, and lured him away by saying the "constable" Cheng Kui wanted a word with him. Wanyun accompanied them to the bridge, where Cheng told him that some clothing had been stolen in town. A culprit had been apprehended and named Wanyun as his accomplice. Wanyun naturally denied this charge, but the retired policeman replied ominously, "When you're brought before the magistrate, there's no worry that you won't confess." He made a grab for the monk, who sat down on the ground and refused to move. Cheng started dragging him, and at this point the two accomplices pretended to intervene,

offering to let Wanyun go in exchange for six thousand cash. He agreed, and they accompanied him to a general store where the owner, a friend of the monk, provided four thousand on his behalf. The phony constables let him go under the condition that he pay the remainder later. Shanghua's deposition provided the rest of the story as Wanyun had told it to him.

The crime was posing as a yamen runner and committing extortion that resulted in the victim's suicide.[2] Accordingly, the provincial governor recommended that Cheng Kui be executed by strangulation after the autumn assizes and his accomplices both be sentenced to a hundred strokes of the heavy bamboo and exile to a distance of three thousand *li*.

This case record is not unique, and the crime of posing as a constable—impersonating a police officer, in today's terms—was not rare in Qing China. My archival sampling brought up no fewer than sixty-four such cases from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[3] One record, an aggregate report from Guangdong, listed nine cases of extortion by phony yamen runners in that province alone for the single year of 1774.[4]

Why was police impersonation such a regular feature of the criminal landscape? Reading the sources with a focus on perpetrators, victims, and the institutional contexts in which the crimes unfolded reveals not only a lively arena of popular criminal activity but also a range of openings in Qing government and society that made that activity possible. Specifically, a loose administrative structure combined with popular fears and expectations to make posing as a constable an attractive option for the criminally inclined, and fiscal constraints crippled government efforts to prevent the crimes.

FRAUDS AND THEIR STRATEGIES

Local policing in the Qing period operated for the most part on three legs. One was the *baojia* neighborhood surveillance system, which registered households in ascending groups of ten, one hundred, and one thousand. Each group chose a head from among its number, members were responsible for reporting unregistered persons and criminal activities to their respective heads, and group heads were required to report the same to the local yamen's Punishments office.[5] A second leg comprised soldiers from local military districts (*xundi*) of the Green Standard armies "defending the posts." In the eighteenth century, their policing duties included catching major criminals, guarding the official courier routes, protecting travelers, and investigating or patrolling for criminal elements.[6] However, most police work (patrolling, arresting criminals, delivering summonses, and so on) was performed by errand runners working out of local government offices. It was these runners (*chaiyi*), and especially the

subgroup known as constables (*buyi*; literally, "arresting runners") who inspired most of the impersonations.[7]

Distribution and Motivations

The sixty-four police impersonation cases in my sample occurred between 1714 and 1842. They were fairly evenly distributed over time and generally dispersed across China. There was at least one case from every province but Zhejiang, and most provinces saw three or more, with the largest numbers in Guangdong (thirteen) and Zhili (eleven, including six cases from Beijing). The higher figure for Zhili is probably the result of greater political vigilance and more complete record keeping in the capital region. Guangdong is a revealing anomaly, as the thirteen cases include nine from the abovementioned aggregate report for 1774. Similar reports from other provinces would no doubt raise the overall case count significantly.[8]

The purpose of almost all runner impersonations was extortion; the posers were looking for money.[9] Crime narratives are clear on this point, often beginning with conspirators "talking about poverty" or stating that an offender was poor or had no regular source of income.[10] The amounts extorted ranged from less than one ounce of silver to more than a thousand. These were extremes, however, and most fell between one and one hundred ounces. Approximately half of the victims paid, or agreed to pay, less than ten ounces or its equivalent in cash, and about one-third paid between ten and a hundred. Some posers took commodities such as salt, cloth, alcohol, grain, or poultry, or a combination of goods and money.

Perpetrators

Perpetrators came from a variety of occupational backgrounds. Many are simply identified as commoners (*minren*) or persons without steady employment. About one-third were former yamen runners, retired or dismissed. The next largest group was laborers (*yonggong*), followed by petty merchants and former yamen clerks. Others appearing more than once in the sample were seal carvers, priests and monks, currently serving yamen clerks (who helped with document forgery), robbers and thieves, itinerant medical practitioners, soldiers, messengers, servants, and beggars. There was also a farmer, a bricklayer, a riverboat pilot, and a wood gatherer. Figuring prominently in the role of assistant runner were principal offenders' friends, neighbors, relatives, and, less commonly, hired hands.

The posers thus came from various walks of life. At least sixteen had some sort of yamen experience, and at least eleven others were literate as well. (These included three unsuccessful examination candidates, the abovementioned seal carvers, and a scribe.) At the other end of the spectrum, quite a few were manual laborers or men with no vocation. Many of them led very humble existences. Cai

Qifeng graduated to phony runner duty after starting out as a highway robber, donkey thief, and jail escapee.[11] Liu Gou (Dog Liu) was a Shandong villager with no regular employment who had been planning to serve as a constable but had not yet enrolled.[12] (Doing so probably would have required nomination by a currently serving runner and payment of an entry fee.[13]) Yang Tingyi was a poor scholar who had failed in the exams and barely eked out a living by selling eagle feathers he collected in the forest in western Yunnan.[14]

These diverse backgrounds suggest a rough divide in the types of people who attempted police impersonation. One was the insider, the former runner. He had resigned or, more often, been dismissed, but retained the occupational knowledge and experience. The other was the outsider, who lacked the insider's experience but brought certain talents to the task. He might be literate and a competent seal carver, or physically strong and imposing. He was bold. An impersonator could be a local fixture, but more often he was uprooted and mobile, committing the crimes away from his home county or province.

Methods

There were three basic strategies. One was falsely accusing an innocent person of criminal activity. Charges included theft, harboring fugitives or otherwise associating with known criminals, smuggling, and purchase of stolen goods. In the simplest instance, a Hubei boatman took sudden inspiration to become a constable when he saw a man pick up (and thus "steal") a tobacco pouch lying on the street in Ba County, Sichuan.[15] The most elaborate involved a phony governor-general's deputy with guards and attendants storming into a wealthy Jiangsu farmer's home to arrest him on false smuggling charges.[16] The most common ruse, however, was of the sort that ensnared the monk Wanyun: two or three men posing as local runners to extort a few thousand coppers. And as in that case, the setups often featured "good cop, bad cop" dynamics, with one aggressive runner feigning eagerness to drag the victim off to the yamen and another interceding to negotiate a more amicable resolution—freedom in exchange for cash.

A second strategy was to confront an actual or suspected lawbreaker. Here the crimes ranged from theft to smuggling, operating illegal distilleries, possession of guns and other weapons, gambling, adultery, and land encroachment. For example, two cousins walking by a house in Shangcai County, Henan, in 1807 noticed three men playing cards inside. Gambling was illegal in late imperial China, and the cousins immediately decided to extort some money.[17] One hurried home and brought back an old chain used for tethering livestock. They then barged into the house and declared that they were subprefectural runners sent to arrest gamblers. One seized the

cards and the other secured the homeowner with the chain. They led him away, releasing him only after he promised to pay fifteen ounces of silver.[18]

The third strategy was to conduct a phony inspection or patrol, in the course of which the posers could either discover something illegal or simply demand fees, traveling expenses, or services (*gongying*) such as lodging and transport. One example of the former is the salt police squad that preyed on fishing boats moored along the Yangzi in Taixing and Jingjiang counties, Jiangsu, in the spring of 1724. The fishermen had salt on board to preserve their catches, and the phony patrollers used this as a pretext to accuse them of smuggling.[19] An example of the fee- or expense-charging ruse is the case of a laborer and two friends who posed as county runners in Luling, Sichuan, in 1802. Pretending to be "patrolling the locale" (*xuncha difang*), they entered a shop and demanded "traveling expenses" (*panfei*) from the shopkeeper, threatening to take him away in chains if he did not oblige.[20] In other cases, false patrollers compelled illiterate victims to provide written guarantees that they were not harboring criminals—and charged a fee to do the writing for them.[21] In a final variation revealed in two reports, gangs of thugs posing as patrollers did not even bother with extortion; they simply engaged in strong-arm robbery.[22]

It was also under the patrol type of imposture that government offices came into play as victims. Four cases in the sample featured a "registration" scam, wherein frauds moving across the countryside visited local yamens to register (*guahao*) for escorts or simply to get their bogus warrants stamped with an official seal before moving on to the next jurisdiction. Three of the schemes worked quite well, making use of the administrative network to facilitate wide-ranging extortions.[23]

Alongside these basic strategies, resourceful posers also tapped into current events. One method was to take advantage of official prohibitions to mount inspections or searches. In 1735, when a struggling itinerant medical practitioner tried to borrow money from an old acquaintance in Gui County, Guangxi, the latter had none to give but proposed a scheme: Of late the authorities were confiscating guns and other weapons. Why didn't the good doctor fabricate a warrant and pose as a county runner to extort some money in the nearby mountain villages? The medical practitioner agreed and they managed to forge the warrant, but he was arrested soon after setting out to conduct the extortions.[24] In 1824, an itinerant laborer, an unsuccessful grain-huller who had closed his business, and four accomplices used the opium prohibition to sting a Cantonese sojourner lodging at the Huizhou native-place hall (*huiguan*) in

Beijing. Learning that the man had opium in his possession, one of the gang bought some and the other five, posing as yamen runners, stormed into the hall to "arrest" the dealer. They relieved him of 170 strings of cash.[25]

Impostors also availed themselves of manhunts relating to specific criminal cases. In 1761, in Guangxi, three "villains" (*jiantu*) from neighboring Hunan forged a warrant and posed as county runners sent to track down the rebel Ma Chaozhu and his followers.[26] Later that year two beggars in the Lingling county seat, Hunan, saw a wanted poster naming five thieves. Inspired, they recruited two accomplices and, posing as runners searching for the fugitives, proceeded to extort money and rice from the residents of various townships and villages in neighboring Guilin Prefecture, Guangxi.[27] In 1766, an unemployed teacher forged arrest orders naming a wealthy Jiangsu farmer as a disgraced official's partner in crime.[28] And, in 1789, a dismissed Taiwan prefectural runner and two accomplices forged an arrest warrant and extorted a total of 197 silver dollars from six wealthy men they falsely accused of being followers of the Jiayi County "traitor" (*jianmin*) Li Xiaochang, whose case was being tried that very month.[29] Thus, criminal cases and social disorders provided opportunities for resourceful posers, who used the familiar events to assume the cloak of official legitimacy and intimidate their victims.

One of the chief distinguishing characteristics of police impersonation cases was the use of threats and physical violence. Records suggest that about two-thirds featured some form of physical aggression, whether beating, grabbing and tying up, or leading a victim away as if to take him to the yamen. Impostors also relied on the implicit likelihood of rough treatment: In many cases they brought chains, ropes, or whips, and victims' depositions describe them carrying such tools of the trade or bringing them out. Implicit violence also came verbally. This could be a simple threat to chain a victim up (*shuansuo*) or take him to the yamen in shackles, or the ominous suggestion of what would happen should the victim fail to comply. ("When you're brought before the magistrate, there's no worry that you won't confess.") In two instances, the posers simply "made a commotion" (*chaonao*) when money was not forthcoming.[30] And in six of the nine cases listed in the Guangdong aggregate memorial of 1775, the official summary identified the crime as *hezha* (to extort with threats) or, in one case, *hepian* (using threats to swindle).[31] Both terms emphasize the use of threats or intimidation (*he*).

Often phony yamen runners supported their claims with physical symbols of official status. Warrants figured in at least twenty-four cases, most commonly authorizing their bearers to search for lawbreakers such as thieves, purchasers of stolen goods, rebel

partisans, or Chinese stirring up trouble in non-Han areas. Chains, shackles, or ropes appeared in another twelve. A few perpetrators used other props such as horses, sedan chairs, lanterns, official-looking hats, robes, and shoes, a command arrow,[32] a musket, and an umbrella.[33] At least five arrived with entourages including runners or attendants; among them, a resourceful bondservant in Beijing employed both regular thugs and actual runners recruited from an outlying county.[34]

OPENINGS FOR FRAUD: OFFICIAL INSPIRATION AND POPULAR FEAR

What inspired all of these adventures? First and foremost, police impersonation was common because the nature of local government made it possible. The heart of the problem was personnel, the rank and file of what moderns call the police force.

Personnel: The Policemen of Qing China

Although there were variations from place to place and elaborations over time, county and department runners typically operated in hierarchies running from heads (*touyi*) based in the yamen to local runners (*sanyi*) and their assistants (*bangyi* or *baiyi*) stationed in the field. Constables worked out of the arrest or thief-catching section (*buban*), one of the four main subgroups of yamen runners.[35] As the term *buyi* suggests, their chief duty was catching criminals.[36] They received their missions and warrants from either a head runner or the magistrate himself. In Ba County, Sichuan, common practice by the 1820s was for a head runner to give an assignment to an intermediate chief, who would go out and complete the task with a local runner or constable.[37] Beneath them, however, was the additional stratum of unregistered and mostly illegal assistants, *bangyi* or *baiyi* for regular runners and *baibu* (literally, “white constables”) for the constables. One eighteenth-century official observed that regular runners typically had three or four assistants. In Ba County, Bradly Reed notes, a runner “might take along several friends, associates, or family members to assist him.”[38]

The ranks were large and their membership fluid. Probably no one knew exactly how many runners and assistants there were, even in small jurisdictions. The *Complete Books of Taxes and Labor Services* (Fuyi quanshu) for the various provinces set small quotas, but these were woefully inaccurate fictions. Qing-era estimates of actual runner numbers ranged from several hundred to more than 1,500 per county.[39] For constables, provinces set their own quotas. These, too, bore little relation to reality, as they did not include the extra-statutory regular constables or the far more numerous assistants. In Ba County, and probably elsewhere, head constables represented the official quota and chiefs and local constables were extranumerary but enrolled in unofficial registers at the yamen. (One such register from

1835 listed 319 men.) There were no such registers for the assistants, however.[40] One nineteenth-century magistrate reported well over a hundred of these in the rural precincts surrounding his county seat in Shaanxi.[41] In 1818, another official noted that in counties across Sichuan they frequently numbered more than a thousand.[42] With such large numbers and the occasional, even ad hoc, nature of the assistants' work (Bradly Reed likens them to "a large pool of occasional laborers"),[43] there was no one, from the magistrate to the local constables, who could have known the precise number and identities of all the men conducting police work in a given county.

There were ongoing efforts, or professed efforts, to eradicate the largely illegal but ubiquitous assistant runners. A prohibition of 1725, for example, noted that local officials circumvented the statutory runner quotas by adding assistants, sometimes hundreds of them, which brought harm to the common people. Cunning assistants "connived with officials' servants and secretaries to engage in swindling without restraint."[44] Regular runners who took unregistered assistants with them and magistrates who condoned it were both subject to punishments.[45] Regulations allowed magistrates to temporarily employ additional runners when workloads became excessive, but in reality many were never dismissed. Prohibitions were issued periodically, but to little or no avail.[46] In the nineteenth century, officials would still be reporting that assistant runners teemed across individual jurisdictions in the hundreds and even thousands, and empire-wide their numbers only grew during the late Qing.[47]

Statutory runners (those within the official quotas), including constables, typically drew token annual salaries of about six ounces of silver. This was not enough to live on, and the real money came through division of various fees exacted from the populace in the course of daily business. For the much larger number of extra-statutory runners and assistants, such fees appear to have been the only remuneration.[48] In Ba County, whenever constables made an arrest or escorted a prisoner from one yamen to another, they would collect a fee from the prisoner and divide the amount evenly among the head who handed down the warrant, the chief who went out to do the job, and the local constables who joined him in the errand.[49]

Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that runners in general and constables in particular were notorious for practicing extortion. Qu Tongzu noted that when a crime was reported, the constables' first order of business was to extort the victim. Next was extracting maximum profit from perpetrators and suspects, real or conveniently imagined. This could involve ransacking a home on the pretext of looking for contraband or forcing a confession from an innocent person, be it a former thief or just some poor soul who

happened to be at hand. Another method, specifically aimed at multiplying the sources of profit, was to have a criminal name innocent persons as coconspirators; the police could then go after them as well. In the Chongqing area this practice was so common it had its own colorful name: "opening the blossom" (*kaihua*).[50]

It is possible that the grimness of Qu's landscape is somewhat overdrawn, but the persistence of some abuses is suggested by successive elaborations on Article 344 of the Qing code ("When an official or clerk receives consideration"), prescribing punishments for miscreants and for the magistrates who condoned or failed to detect their extortions.[51] In addition, an edict of 1741 prohibited local magistrates from stationing constables in subdistricts and outlying areas in their jurisdictions. The edict followed deliberations on a censor's proposal that, in order to keep them from becoming ensconced with local criminal elements and collecting all sorts of illicit fees, constables should not be permitted to even *leave* the yamen until ordered to make an arrest.[52] While conceding that most constables were "not good types" (*fei liangshan zhi bei*), the Board of Punishments argued that keeping them all inside the yamen would violate the principle of guarding local jurisdictions. It therefore recommended that although stationing should be forbidden, patrolling was an unavoidable necessity.[53]

Finally, in outward appearance there appears to have been little to distinguish constables, and especially their assistants, from ordinary people.[54] Constables were reputedly the poorest and most despised of all yamen runners.[55] Most runners, constables included, were legally classified as "mean people" (*jianmin*), and sumptuary regulations limited them to light blue fabrics of ordinary silk, wool, hemp, and cotton.[56] Official robes were thus out of the question, though one case record and some literary evidence suggest that runners wore "red and black caps" (*honghei mao*), and a witness's deposition in the same case expressed surprise at the absence of dark clothing (*qingyi*).[57] It is likely that assistant runners especially wore no special clothing or accouterments. As for other markers of official status, runners were expected to carry a warrant when making an arrest, but observance of this requirement was uneven. Often they would carry chains, but this was not always the case as magistrates tried to limit their use.[58]

In sum, Qing policemen were on the whole a lowly, amorphous, and predatory bunch. Most were not even formally registered, and might well be unknown even by head runners. A runner might wear dark clothing and a red-and-black cap, bear a warrant authorizing his errand, or carry chains or shackles—but then again he, and even more so his assistants, could appear without any of these official markers. Constables in particular came from humble backgrounds; most of

them were poor and many were experienced lawbreakers themselves.[59] They invariably collected customary fees to cover their expenses and often availed themselves of the opportunity to extort more, from guilty and innocent alike.

All of this made runner an attractive role for imitation by those looking to make quick money. It required few skills, little or no capital outlay, and made extortion easier by giving it an aura of state power and authority. The constable was, after all, a government agent deputed by the local yamen. As an eminent eighteenth-century official observed, runners (along with clerks, relatives, and servants) "do not have officials' responsibilities, but do have officials' authority" (*quanwei*).[60] In addition, the lower levels of the runner hierarchy were shifting, illicit, and nearly beyond the control of the typical magistrate, and the runner's outward appearance was easily replicated. Virtually any able-bodied adult male could serve, or pose, as a runner or one of his assistants. It was not too difficult to blend in for a moment or an afternoon.

Warrants and Pursuit between Jurisdictions

A second set of openings, or invitations to fraud, in the official policing apparatus came in the area of procedural controls. These are most clear with regard to two activities, the issuing of warrants and the pursuit of fugitives across jurisdictional boundaries.

The warrant had a checkered career in the eighteenth century. One problem was its frequent absence. A magistrate was required by law to issue an order or warrant (variously termed *chaipiao, paipiao, qianpiao, xinpai*, or *xin-piao*) when sending a constable or other runner to make an arrest, summon a witness, or conduct other business such as collecting taxes.[61] The warrant was to be stamped with an official seal, in some cases over both the character *xing* ("approved" or "enforce") and the name of the constable assigned to make the arrest.[62] Reality did not always correspond to this ideal, however, for there is evidence that many officials took documentary shortcuts or ignored the warrant requirement altogether. In 1741, a censor reported that runners from the Beijing Gendarmerie often made arrests without warrants, which easily led to "evil practices."[63] In response, the Board of Punishments drafted a new requirement that each runner making an arrest must carry a warrant that clearly indicated the name of the person or persons to be arrested and bore an official seal. Runners who made arrests without them were to be handed over to the Board, and the responsible officials would be subject to administrative sanctions.[64]

At about the same time the president of the Board of Punishments reported an even more widespread practice: Instead of issuing proper warrants on pre-printed forms and endorsed with the official seal

(figure 4.1), magistrates throughout the provinces were simply using little handwritten "tickets" (*xiaopiao*) and memos (*dan*) endorsed only with red dots. Such documents were easily forged, and their use was leading to all kinds of abuse by yamen clerks and runners—and perhaps even by outsiders. These included forging summonses "to extort the naïve or avenge private wrongs, seizing people and beating them [to force confessions]." The emperor approved the memorialist's proposal that "henceforward all warrants use the official seal . . . and little handwritten warrants and yamen memos shall be forever forbidden," so that officials would "use seals in trembling obedience and the problem of extortion with bogus warrants can be removed."[65]

Nearly a century later, the celebrated magistrate Liu Heng (1776–1841) drew special attention to warrants in a list of ten "gong-sounding articles" (*mingluo tiaokuan*) publicly posted in his jurisdiction. Under any of the ten circumstances on the list, the people of the county could bypass the regular petitioning procedure and go straight to the yamen to make an oral complaint before the magistrate, who promised to come out when he heard the gong.[66] Third on the list was "Report runners who recklessly make arrests without warrants." An accompanying public notice stated:

> When constables go to the rural neighborhoods you people must ask to make clear the reason and inspect to see whether there is a warrant stamped with a seal. If the runners do not have a warrant stamped with the seal of this county yet recklessly arrest someone and confiscate property, the victims are permitted to send someone to the county seat to sound the gong and make an oral report.[67]

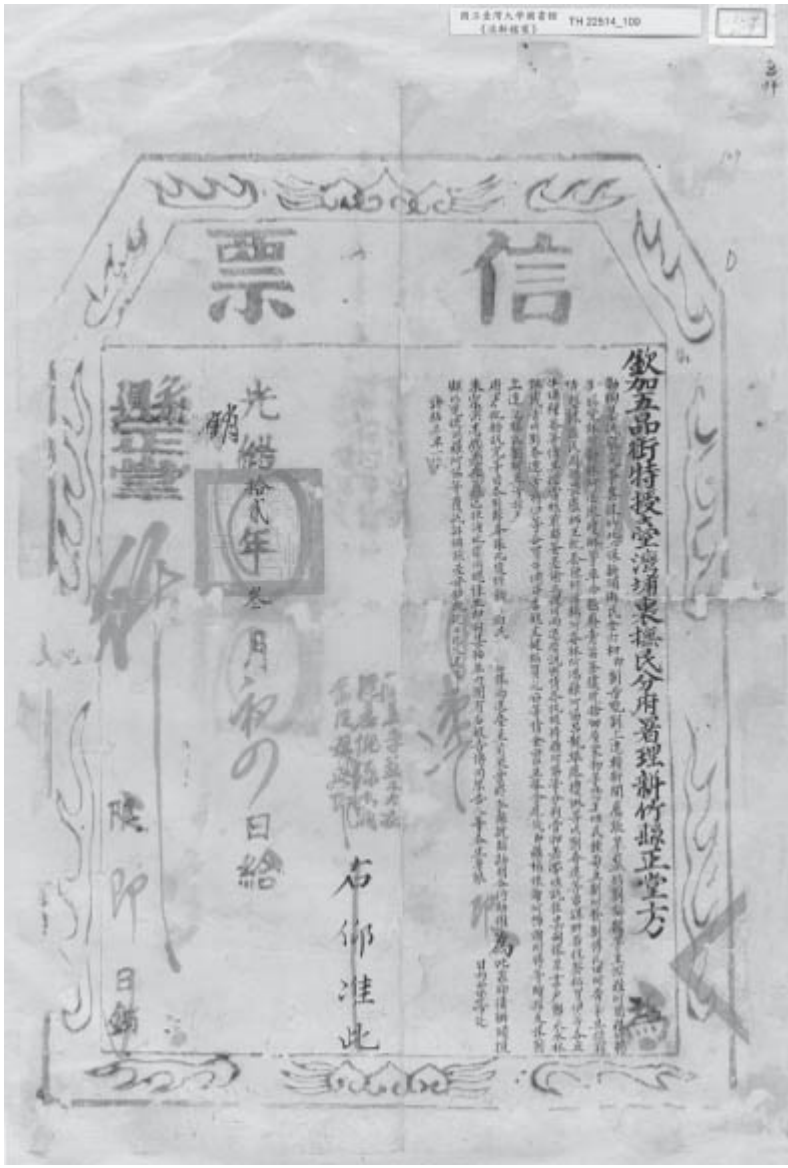

FIGURE 4.1. Arrest warrant and court summons from Xinzhu County, Taiwan, on pre-printed form with handwritten particulars, the magistrate's seal stamp, and various endorsement (*biaopan*) markings. Tan-Hsin Archives, no. 22514.109, Guangxu 12.3.4 (April 7, 1886). National Taiwan University Library Collection. (This warrant dates to the late Qing, but earlier specimens have much the same form and content. See, for example, two warrants of 1690 and 1748 in *Huizhou qiannian qiyue wenshu: Qing, Minguo bian*, 1: 105 and 307, respectively.)

These dynastic and local policies were clearly a response to procedural shortcuts that, for the sake of convenience, were exposing the

populace to abuse. Officials' failure to issue proper warrants facilitated the use of bogus warrants and summonses (or none at all) to victimize "ignorant people." The warrant system had obviously been compromised by official laxity and popular ignorance.

A second problem was not failure to issue warrants but, quite the opposite, "handing them out" so freely that they fell into the wrong hands. In 1760, the Jiangxi administration commissioner reported that regular runners commonly avoided the onerous duty of pursuing criminals into neighboring provinces by giving their warrants to assistants or hirelings, who then used them to commit extortion. Worse still:

> There is even fabricating of warrants and falsely claiming to have been sent on official errands, presenting the warrants for registration at the departments and counties they reach. Local officials carelessly affix their seals, confusing the false with the real.[68]

The law subsequently enacted to prevent these problems included punishment for officials who set abuses in motion by giving warrants to untrustworthy runners. Seventy years later, however, an addition to this substatute suggested that it had not been uniformly obeyed in the intervening decades. The revision of 1832 added the words "irresponsibly give seal-endorsed warrants" (*langei yinpiao*), to make it clear that punishments should be meted out not only to the runners who transferred their warrants to surrogates but also to the magistrates who issued them in the first place.[69]

Another variety of "handing out" warrants was banned in 1764. This was the custom of issuing warrants to victims of theft so that they could pursue the criminals themselves. The governor who requested the prohibition observed that this was a long-standing practice among department and county magistrates and one that "easily gives rise to problems."[70] Thus, in addition to the ubiquitous runners' assistants, local policing in the eighteenth century also featured theft victims obtaining warrants to "personally pursue" (*ziqi*) the culprits. The policing waters were murky indeed.

Warrants presented special problems in connection with the pursuit of criminals across jurisdictions, and especially across provincial boundaries. These problems revolved around both the warrants themselves and the requirement that runners register at the local yamen. In the early Qing, if a pursuit led runners into a neighboring prefecture or province they had to register for assistance at the local yamen before arresting the criminal. This requirement was eliminated in 1740, allowing runners to catch their quarry first and then inform the local authorities.[71]

There was another policy shift twenty years later, in 1760, when

the Qianlong emperor approved a prohibition on issuing traditional warrants to pursue major criminals across provincial boundaries. This was in response to the abovementioned abuses involving assistants and other troublemakers committing extortion and counterfeiting warrants to register for assistance in distant jurisdictions, where all too often the authorities did not closely inspect their credentials. The solution adopted was to require that instead of issuing warrants, officials should notify the relevant provinces and simultaneously give their deputed runners travel passes (*tongguan*), allowing them to pursue the criminals in secret and present the passes for assistance when they found them.[72]

The new policy was designed to combat extortion by runners' assistants, hirelings, and outright posers. However, three cases from the years following its promulgation cast doubt on how well it was working. One was that of the three men who forged a warrant and pretended to be county runners from Hunan hunting for the rebel Ma Chaozhu. They registered at various civil and military yamens in eastern Guangxi, where local officials, failing to detect the forgeries and seemingly oblivious to the new travel pass rule, provided assistance and escorts as they worked their way through five counties and three prefectures over a two-month period. The governor recommended impeachment for all officials who had failed to inspect the seals and, "like puppets," allowed the scoundrels to register at their yamens.[73] In another case nine years later, authorities in Guangdong reported the arrest of one Rao Yuan, a dismissed constable from She County, Anhui, who had forged a warrant authorizing himself to pursue escaped convicts. He used it to register at seventy-seven yamens in seven provinces.[74]

Thus, lax enforcement of official policies left openings not only for unscrupulous clerks, runners, and runners' assistants, but also for enterprising posers. This was especially the case across provincial boundaries, where official communications grew sluggish and local magistrates could be less than attentive to runners from outside jurisdictions.

Popular Susceptibilities

Although their chief purpose was to identify criminals and recommend appropriate punishments, case reports also afford glimpses of the victims and their responses to imposture. Drawing our gaze from the official policing apparatus to common people, this information reveals vulnerabilities to runner impersonation in society at large.

According to the confession of Hua Wenzhao, who schemed to defraud an innocent but wealthy farmer,

> I figured that when we got to his house and seized him, he would naturally start pleading. I would then allow him to avoid

> arrest on account of illness, cheating him of a few hundred ounces of silver.[75]

This statement not only reflects one of the basic strategies employed by police impersonators, but also speaks to the other side of the encounter. The same extortions that inspired impostors also conditioned popular expectations, and impostors were able to carve out spaces between local government and local society by capitalizing on common perceptions of the yamen and its underlings.

In fifty reports involving more than a hundred extortions, I have found only seven people who simply refused to pay. At least nine times that number complied, paying the fee or ransom or agreeing to pay it in a short time.[76] Even the patently innocent, those falsely accused of imaginary crimes, submitted to the extortions. Why the acquiescence? Fear seems to have been the main factor, with many case reports referring to it explicitly. Some victims were simply intimidated by the impostors' violent behavior. After a couple of *jiansheng* from Jiangnan were framed in a pleasure-house sting in Beijing in 1757, one of the victims deposed that, "The two of us, pressed by them, were extremely afraid [*haipa buguo*] and could only agree" to pay hundreds of ounces in silver to avoid being arrested for consorting with a prostitute.[77] A man who had sold some land in a shady deal outside the capital defied his accusers at first but was frightened (*haipa*) and agreed to pay thirty ounces of silver after one of them struck him in the face.[78] An innocent simpleton tied to a pillar in an empty temple and roughed up by his accusers "was frightened and confessed to stealing."[79]

There was another object of fear: what might happen at the yamen if the victim failed to cooperate. A Shanxi *jiansheng* confronted at his home by a phony provincial runner claiming to be under orders to arrest him, for example, "was terrified [*huangju*], not knowing what crime he had committed."[80] The two *jiansheng* who were framed in the abovementioned pleasure-house swindle had gone to the capital to await minor appointments. Their case prompted the Qianlong emperor to issue an edict in which he noted that provincials serving as officials in the capital were frequent victims of such blackmail, since they were always willing to pay up rather than have their careers ruined by a trip to the yamen. "This is why they willingly endure [swindlers'] intimidations. This is how scoundrels setting traps are able to succeed in their schemes."[81]

Fear of the yamen was not limited to men with ambitions for government service. When a Shanxi beggar chief posed as a department runner and threatened to arrest a man for marrying a woman who already had a husband (absent for four years and given up for gone by his own mother), the groom "didn't have the money

and was afraid of getting caught up at the yamen" (*dao guan shoulei*).[82] Similarly, a farmer falsely accused of receiving stolen goods, "terrified of going to the yamen [*weiju dao guan*], broke free and ran outside" of his house to escape the phony runners' clutches.[83] A Canton money changer falsely accused of "gathering gamblers and keeping prostitutes" deposed that, "I was afraid of getting involved [*weilei*] and agreed to give them 160 dollars."[84] And a "terrified" (*jupa*) salt shop proprietor in the metropolitan prefecture surrendered 3,300 cash when a phony runner threatened to arrest him for illicitly brewing alcohol.[85] Indeed, I have only seen one case in which a victim stated that he did not mind going to the yamen.[86]

The prospect of suffering at the yamen also loomed in eleven cases in which the victims committed suicide.[87] Five hanged themselves, like the abbot Wanyun described at the beginning of this chapter. Two drowned: a monk named Song Yue jumped into a pond when confronted by phony runners hired to collect a debt, and Wu Fuyun, the man who married a woman whose husband had disappeared, threw himself down a well.[88] Two men cut their own throats, one after being falsely accused of stealing a cow, the other when a former runner tracked him down to avenge an injury.[89] When three men happened upon an adulterous couple at an inn and posed as runners to extort them, the lovers poisoned themselves.[90] Whether these tragic suicides stemmed from fear of extortion or judicial torture or reflected some other motivation (shame, for example), they illustrate the anxiety that the threat of yamen justice could cause; some victims literally preferred death to a trip to the yamen. Thus, it was the nature and reputation of local government itself that set the stage. The imposture could be crude and simple; it was the victim's expectations that gave it depth and caused panic.[91]

Inexperience and gullibility also played a part in leading people to cooperate with extortionists. Although it was not generally salient for interrogation and sentencing, a few case records specifically state that a victim or witness believed the posers were legitimate. After getting caught with a counterfeit warrant he had used to extort nearly 200 silver dollars from six wealthy men in the Taiwan countryside, the phony prefectural runner Lin Yiquan said of his victims: "They are all bumpkins [*xiangyu*], and when they saw the seal they figured it was real."[92] The card player Fan Yongnian deposed that when the Cao cousins stormed into his home and secured him with a chain, "I just thought they really were runners and went along" as they led him away.[93] We can add to the list victims who case narratives state were afraid of going to the yamen, and also the scores of oblivious yamen clerks who failed to detect the forgeries when phony runners came to register with bogus warrants.

The most telling example is the case of Liu Gou, the abovementioned villager in Dan County, Shandong. He accidentally clubbed his victim to death while pressing him for money. Liu "wanted" to be a constable and had already bought an old set of manacles when he began to suspect that fellow villager Wang Keren was a thief.[94] Seizing Wang in the marketplace one day, he declared, "You have committed a crime. I am a constable now, and I'm taking you to report to the authorities. You still dare to deny it?" Later, when he led Wang to a friend's shack outside the village, the friend asked, "Have you really become a constable?" Liu replied, "If I weren't really a constable, would I dare to arrest a thief?" (Buzhen chong buyi gan nazei ma?)

This flippant response satisfied the host and allowed Liu to proceed with his interrogation and extortion.[95] More than that, it spoke to the heart of the imposture phenomenon. In assuming the yamen runner's role impersonators were playing into common expectations of runner behavior. There was an insidious logic to Liu's rhetorical question: only a true constable would dare to arrest a thief; therefore, he who arrested a thief was obviously a constable. The act of arresting confirmed his identity. What is more—and here was the allure of runner impersonation—the extortion following the arrest also made perfect sense because, as everyone knew, that is how constables operated. Liu might as well have responded: If I weren't really a constable, would I dare to take money from my prisoner?

The handful of cases in which intended victims rebuffed the impostors are also revealing, because they indicate the difference that a little knowledge or experience could make. Clerks who detected forged warrants naturally fell into this category, their skill or vigilance prevailing over the posers' counterfeit documents. So, too, could local policing or surveillance agents. In 1790, for example, the poor scholar Yang Tingyi used his seal-carving skills to forge a governor-general's order to arrest bandits (*feilei*) in Yunnan. When he demanded travel expenses from a rural district head, however, the latter grew suspicious because it had never been the practice for deputies or runners to approach headmen for travel money.[96] He asked to see the warrant, at which point the scholar lost his nerve and refused to hand it over, trying instead to bluster his way through by puffing up and striking his inquisitor in the face. Doubly suspicious now, the headman put the man up for the night and gave him 2,000 cash for expenses—but promptly reported the fraud to county authorities the next day.[97] The scholar could write and carve seals, but the headman knew the official system better.

There were also a few cases of common people seeing through impostures. When a former salt constable sent two phony patrols to

prey on smugglers in the Jiangsu countryside in 1724, one of them encountered an experienced smuggler named Yao Er, who tossed his bag of salt in the river and strode right up to the patrollers. Declaring that they were phonies, he asked which yamen they came from and demanded to see their orders.[98] We will never know what made Yao so certain, as he was killed in the ensuing altercation, but his words and actions suggest good knowledge of the salt policing business.[99] The second group of phony patrollers preyed on a different class of victims, fishermen who happened to have salt on their boats to help preserve their catches. None of these victims challenged the patrollers or asked to see their warrant. Rather, they simply acquiesced; bluster sufficed, and over the course of two weeks the impostors extorted the equivalent of sixty ounces of silver in salt, rice, wheat, cloth, silver, and cash.

This case neatly illustrates the importance of the intended victim's knowledge or ignorance of official procedures. With the first patrol, the smuggler's knowledge protected him and laid the foundation for a confrontation. The former constable knew where smugglers could be found, but the smuggler knew where constables should be and what credentials they should carry. His knowledge neutralized that of the impostors. With the second patrol, the fishermen's ignorance paved the way for easy extortion.

Another imposture in Jiangsu ended with a dramatic unmasking. In 1766, an unemployed teacher forged a governor-general's orders and organized a ten-man party to storm into a wealthy farmer's home in Changshu County and arrest the man, whom the bogus orders identified as a "great pirate" (*tongyang dadao*) and smuggler. The farmer protested his innocence, but it was a neighbor observing the scene who perceived that all was not right with the official party. The guards and attendants were dressed quite shabbily, an attendant seemed to be doing most of the talking, and the local magistrate who should have escorted them was nowhere to be seen. Convinced that the raid was a sham, the neighbor went upstairs and began throwing roof-tiles down into the courtyard, shouting at the same time for others to come seize the intruders.[100] The fraud had made careful preparations, but met his match in someone who knew what an official entourage looked like and how its members should speak and behave.

In each of these cases, the impostors' skills and audacity were outweighed by the intended victims' (or a witness's) knowledge of proper official procedures. These were the exceptions, however. Most people lacked such knowledge or experience (even clerks could be duped), and most impersonators targeted members of the general populace. Fooled by the impostor or afraid of the yamen (or both),

these were the people who were most susceptible to extortion.

Experience Desirable, Audacity Required

Posing as a runner did not require much in the way of job qualifications. The runners' "mean" status meant that most impostors would be stepping down socially, not reaching up, when they assumed the role. As we have seen, moreover, there was little in the way of "uniform" or accouterments. As for technical skills, literacy conferred clear advantages but was not indispensable. As noted above, the archives suggest that approximately half of all posers used warrants. Producing one required a combination of literacy, access to a template, and the ability to carve or replicate the image of an official seal. These qualifications were beyond most of the population, but still the literate numbered in the millions and many impostures featured men who had practiced seal carving or character engraving (*kezi*) since youth. The illiterate or insufficiently skilled could recruit partners to execute the forgeries for them, moreover. In addition, nearly half of the impostors conducted their extortions without a warrant, bypassing these special needs altogether.

If socioeconomic status, outward appearance, and educational level were no obstacles, practical experience was certainly beneficial, as evidenced by the fact that many impersonators had previously served as runners or assistants. Cheng Kui and Cao Bin, who drove the abbot Wanyun to suicide, were both former constables.[101] Two of the "registration" cases featured former runners as well. One of them began his escapade assisting another runner in the pursuit of criminals. Subsequently they parted ways, but he used the original warrant as a template for a new, counterfeit one.[102] Clerical experience was also useful, particularly when it came to fabricating warrants, as attested by the presence of five clerks or former clerks in the case records.

Knowledge of policing procedures was not limited to men who had served as yamen underlings. The archival sample includes a highway robber who had subsequently joined yamen runners in two thief-catching missions, a neighborhood surveillance head, and a boatman who had served as a pilot for official patrols.[103] For those lacking such backgrounds, moreover, everyday knowledge of the basic law of the land could suffice. The cousins who broke up a stranger's card game knew that gambling was illegal, for instance, and other frauds used prohibitions on smuggling, prostitution, and opium smoking to advantage.[104]

It should also be noted that in a job for which duties included extracting fees, issuing threats, roughing people up, and dragging them away, physical strength or imposing stature surely conferred advantages. This may help to explain, in part, why so many laborers

appeared in the impersonators' ranks. The only occupational group that took to it in larger numbers was former yamen runners.

What did it take, then, to pose as a policeman in Qing China? Experience, literacy, a fake warrant, and the odd length of chain or rope could all be helpful, but the chief ingredient was audacity, which the archives suggest was in good supply. Perpetrators had the nerve to step into their roles. Once under way, moreover, the performance itself could be empowering. Cao Bin walked up to Wanyun's monastery and led the monk away by declaring that "the constable Cheng Kui was waiting to speak with him," and Cheng then told him he had been identified as an accomplice to theft.[105] The former constables were no doubt playing familiar roles: tracking down a suspect or targeting an innocent victim, leading him to a quiet spot, starting with an accusation, and continuing with threats and a little roughing up to facilitate the extortion. They were well rehearsed, and the monk fell for the act.

Cai Qifeng was a highway robber who, together with two associates, robbed some travelers on the road to En County, Shandong. He was eventually caught but escaped from jail and fled north, begging for food as he went. Early in 1728 he reached Tongzhou, on the outskirts of the dynastic capital. A soldier spotted him sitting in front of a temple and began questioning him, and in order to avoid further trouble Cai volunteered, ironically, to help pursue an escaped jail-breaker. He spent the next six weeks as a participant in two fruitless thief-catching missions, one led by subdepartmental yamen runners. Then he fled and took to the road again. One day soon afterwards, he saw a cart with three travelers. In a similar situation two years previously, Cai and his fellow brigands had physically "blocked" (*lanzhu*) a cart and menacingly told its occupants that they had no traveling money. This time, alone but fresh from a stint of government service, Cai "called the cart to a halt" (*jiaozhu*). Identifying himself as a subdepartmental runner, he asked the occupants if they knew of a certain fugitive's whereabouts. When they said they did not, he led them to an inn, tied one of them up, and began extorting money and valuables.[106] Thus, Cai had progressed from robbing travelers without pretense to detaining them while posing as a policeman. The model provided by the Tongzhou runners had inspired him to grow into a new role.

Hua Wenzhao, mastermind of the "great pirate" shakedown in Changshu County, Jiangsu, was bolder still. After losing his teaching job in Jingui County in 1765, Hua ended up staying with a relative who was a monk in Changshu, and he tagged along when a wealthy farmer named Cheng Erzhong invited the monks to recite sutras at his home. There he noticed that the farmer was not only rich but also

lived in an isolated neighborhood; he would make a good target. Inspired, Hua worked out a plan involving counterfeit arrest orders, a phony governor-general's deputy, and an entourage including runners and guards. He dared not play the deputy's role himself, lest the farmer recognize him. Instead he persuaded a gullible acquaintance to do it, first recruiting him for a fictitious bridal procession and subsequently letting him in on the "secret" that he was on assignment from the governor-general's yamen. The boatmen and hired helpers who formed the rest of the entourage were also dupes, recruited on the day of the heist under the pretense of assembling a bridal escort. It was only when the boats were nearing their destination that Hua told them his "master" (the gullible acquaintance) was actually an official deputy on a confidential arrest mission. Since he had not brought runners, he would need to borrow the helpers and four boatmen. The recruits kowtowed before their new master, and Hua handed out caps, ropes, and whips he had bought at shops in Suzhou the day before. Then he gave his "master" his final instructions:

> When we get to Cheng Erzhong's home, you sit in the center [of the courtyard] and call him forward. Just ask him, "Are you Cheng Erzhong?" When he answers that he is Cheng Erzhong, you order us to seize him. Don't say another word, lest you be seen through. I'll take care of everything.[107]

The victim's deposition describes what followed:

> When my servant opened the door, guards with lanterns led in an official and another man holding a command arrow. They entered my courtyard and the official took a seat in the center, wearing official robes and cap. He called me forward and demanded, "Are you Cheng Erzhong?" I said, "Yes, I am," and he said, "Seize him!" The men on either side bound me with ropes. I asked on what account, and the man with the command arrow brought out a vermilion document, stating that I had [illegally] sold rice overseas.[108]

The assistant with the command arrow was Hua Wenzhao, who took over at this point and began closing in for the extortion. It was a daring ruse, and might have succeeded if not for the intervention, with roof-tiles, of an observant neighbor. Hua later confessed, "I don't know how they saw through it."

IMPERSONATION TRUE AND FALSE

Runner impersonation was a real crime. The statutes were in the code, distinct from those governing corrupt yamen underlings, and the archives hold cases that clearly involved common scoundrels rather than actual runners. Alongside the rich vein of authentic impostures, however, there was probably an additional layer of deceptions. In 1771 the acting governor of Hunan, Udasan, received a report that a

dismissed yamen underling had been arrested for forging a county seal. The man had collected a landowner's tax payment and pretended to remit it on his behalf, stamping the phony seal on the official stub attached to the land deed. Interrogated by county authorities, the forger declared he had only swindled this one time, destroying the seal afterwards. Udasan was skeptical:

> [I] find that when departments and counties handle seal forgery cases, they always allow the criminal to make a cunning confession. . . . Some [reports] even falsely turn clerks into commoners, scheming to avoid administrative sanctions and close the case lightly. Such abuse is widespread.[109]

In other words, in some case reports magistrates turned corrupt clerks into criminal commoners in order to avoid punishment for failing to control their underlings. Viewing matters in this light, how many of the archive's runner impersonation cases might not have been impersonations after all?

Crime reports were a genre of Qing writing, and recent scholarship has shown that officials (or more likely, their legal secretaries) deployed various devices to steer their narratives in the proper direction. Broadly speaking, the proper direction lay in describing competent and conscientious officials and a harmonious local society. This could help a magistrate to avoid negative performance evaluations and also reassure higher authorities that all was well under Heaven. What narrative devices might mark a contrived impersonation, then?

Two types of report invite attention, one for a detail it provided and the other for information it withheld. As mentioned above, in about one-third of the cases the perpetrators are identified as former yamen runners. The most common designation is "dismissed runner" (*geyi*), and it was just such a dismissed runner case that caught Udasan's attention and prompted his complaint to the throne. Former runners were well placed to use the tricks of their old trade, but for those who were still in service a small slip of the brush could protect the responsible magistrate, distancing him from the troublemaker by recasting the latter as a common scoundrel who had posed as a government underling. It was probably a temptation that some magistrates could not resist.

The other suspicious type of case record is that which is strangely silent on the matter of the perpetrator's background. Most case reports identify miscreants by name, age, marital status and family size, and occupation. In these odd cases, by contrast, the wrongdoers are only identified by name. The Cao cousins (we learn nothing more about them) were simply walking down a street when they noticed a card game and decide to break it up.[110] Similarly, two men named Wang

Fengshan and Wang Da (again, that is all) were walking to the county seat when they saw a suspicious-looking fellow standing by a clump of trees and decided to accost him.[111] It is as if these perpetrators sprang into existence just in time to commit their crimes. It would be a mistake to assume that all case reports featuring dismissed runners or street phantoms hid actual constables, but they are reasonable candidates for suspicion.

To whatever extent such falsifications occurred, they brought the imposture dynamic full circle. Impersonation requires a human template, someone to be impersonated. Throughout the high Qing various actors found yamen runner to be an attractive role to imitate, and in doing so they created a new template—the impostor—that some magistrates found to be attractive for purposes of falsification. Thus, real yamen runners inspired fakes, and the existence of fakes made it possible to declare real runners false.

OPENINGS AND REFLECTIONS

Police impersonation reveals a special kind of audacity with regard to official authority. The protagonists were rogue actors in the state-and-society relationship, not local elites, comfortable landowners, or successful merchants, but dismissed yamen underlings, struggling artisans, unemployed laborers, and vagrants. Stepping into the foggy space at the lowest reaches of the government apparatus, they appropriated official authority for their own material gain. They were not seizing power (this was not rebellion), but borrowing and diverting it for their own purposes. The power was a conduit to money.

The state was well aware of this. Officials included impersonation in their discussions of warrant and registration problems and complained that subordinates were recasting abusive underlings as common swindlers in their case reports. By 1800 the law itself would be toughened to punish egregious police impersonations not as theft but according to the harsher standards for "verminous underlings fraudulently obtaining property."[112] All of this was tacit recognition that impostors were feeding off the chain of official moneygrubbing and corruption—but none of it addressed underlying causes.

In the early 1820s the prefect of Tai'an, Shandong, admonished his subordinate magistrates on how to control their constables:

> Among the methods for repressing robbers, nothing is more difficult than making use of the people who pursue and arrest them. . . . If they are not used well, not only will you not obtain their efforts, but also there will be nowhere that the abuses of nourishing thieves and framing the good do not reach. For this reason, those who use constables must first raise the funds for pursuit and arrest. If [you] can nourish their bodies, then [you]

can use their strength.[113]

In other words, the first requirement for effective policing, and for effective control of the police, was to cover the expenses. Unfortunately, the Qing state as a whole never came close to meeting this need, and as a result it was left to the general populace to bear the burden.[114] This basic economic fact was the root cause of runner depredation and its mirror image, runner impersonation. Without reliable revenue streams at the local level, the extraction of fees from common people was necessary for the daily operation of local government. This became institutionalized. It was also conducive to corruption, since the lines between legitimate collection and abusive extortion were indistinct and in negotiations the extractors had recourse to state-sanctioned violence.

Police impersonation, then, was an extension of the "verminous underling" problem, which stemmed from the limited financial and administrative resources of local government. These limitations were a function of basic principles and mechanisms underlying the imperial state. Philosophical values and political prudence combined to prevent significant expansion of government size and capacities at the local level. Court and officialdom could strengthen the provisions of the penal code and try to tighten administrative controls, but without basic fiscal restructuring the state could no more eliminate impersonation than eradicate fee collection by true runners. The one was a direct reflection of the other, inspired and facilitated by it.

From the impersonator's viewpoint, the temptations to police impersonation were considerable. Yamen runners were everywhere, and easily imitated. Perpetrators and their victims shared a common understanding of the official world, moreover, and particularly of the local yamen and its minions. The fact that the inspiration struck so many, over decades and even centuries in towns and villages across the empire, points to an environment in which extortionate runners were an integral part of the government apparatus and, just as important, common folks were wont to pay them off. Indeed, the one indispensable precondition for a successful impersonation was the victim's hope that paying a bribe or fee would make the runner go away. The impostor was thus aided by the fears and expectations of his victims.

Impostors thus occupied a murky middle ground between an incomplete official apparatus above and a vulnerable populace below, exploiting both sides to carve out fleeting spaces in which they could assume the face of the state to extract money from isolated victims. This is not to say that state and society were defenseless. Warranting and other procedural requirements clearly prevented some fraud, and some victims saw through the deceptions and even helped catch the

offenders. But the official structure created an arena in which impostors could try their luck, and each crime played out as a test of knowledge, wit, will, and even physical strength. The aggressors held visions of yamen injustice over their prey, and this tended to achieve the desired result. The state could not have eliminated the arena or altered those visions without transforming local government, both inside and outside the yamen. In this respect, at the lowest level where the government dealt with its populace largely through an informal service class beneath the regular officialdom, state and society were systemically vulnerable to police impersonation.

CHAPTER 5

Forgery: Gaining Trust in a Land of Documents and Seals

Seal (*yin*): proof carried by [those] in charge of the state
—*Shuowen jiezi* (Han-dynasty dictionary)

Incoming and outgoing documents depend entirely on their seals for validation.
—Bai Zhongshan,
Jiangsu provincial administration commissioner, 1732

IMPERSONATION'S GREAT PARTNER IN CRIME WAS FORGERY. This was true not only because posers often used counterfeit documents to support their false identities, but also because documents themselves could be put to a range of profitable uses. In fact, forgery was more common than impersonation. And where there was a bogus document, there was usually a counterfeit seal.

OFFICIAL SEALS AND COMMON FORGERIES

The key authenticating act in the conduct of most official business in late imperial China was the presentation of a document stamped with the appropriate official seal or seals (*yinxin*).[1] Proclamations, commands, warrants, interoffice communications, certificates of rank and office, tallies identifying an agent on a special mission, vouchers, tax receipts—all of these official instruments bore authenticating seals. The Qing state controlled the production, distribution, and use of official seals through a combination of physical specifications, procedural regulations, and punishments for misuse. Minor local officials used wooden chops engraved by official carvers under the direction of the provincial administration commissions.[2] All other seals, from the emperor's on down, were cast at the Board of Rites' Seal Service (Zhuyin Ju), in a few instances in concert with the Palace Workshop (Zaoban Chu). Detailed specifications governed the size, shape, material (type of metal or wood), and metallic content of each seal, as well as the languages and calligraphic styles to be used in the inscription (figures. 5.1 and 5.2).[3] At the time of production, the date and a unique identifying number were inscribed on the side of the seal and entered in a special register for later reference. When a seal was lost or worn to the point that its imprint was no longer clear, the official in charge was required to apply for a replacement. Upon receipt of the new seal, the old one had to be returned to the Board of Rites for destruction, with the character for "return" (*jiao*) carved in the center across the original seal characters.[4]

Additional statutory procedures and punishments governed document traffic and the use, misuse, and custody of seals in the course of everyday administration.[5] Moreover, the late imperial state

took an extremely dim view of people who fabricated official documents, especially those who forged the seals. The Ming and Qing codes prescribed heavy punishments for such offenders.[6]

All of these safeguards and punishments notwithstanding, counterfeiting was common. The forgeries covered a wide range of official documents, from county tax receipts and arrest warrants to governors' directives and even imperial edicts. They also ran the gamut of official licenses, from certificates of rank to travel and business permits. In the vast majority of cases, the key was an attempt to reproduce the official seal that authenticated a document and thus made it a working instrument of official authority.

In my sampling of 181 cases involving bogus documents, the most common forgeries were orders or commands (forty-three of them, from imperial edicts to county-level errand orders), tax receipts (thirty), certificates of official rank or title (twenty-five), and arrest warrants (twenty-four). Others occurring with considerable frequency were travel and transport permits (thirteen), proclamations and other announcements (eleven), communications between government yamens (ten), and salary, ration, or labor reimbursement tickets (at least eight).

MOTIVES AND USES

Bogus documents were typically produced for one of three purposes: to obtain money, secure travel accommodations, or enhance one's prestige. The money motive, by far the most common, is evident in the numerous false arrest, proxy tax remittance, and proxy purchase-of-rank schemes, in all of which the swindlers presented documents to fool someone into parting with their silver or cash. Forged warrants figured in approximately half of the phony constables' extortions discussed in chapter four, and purchase-of-rank scams are the special subject of chapter six. In the realm of tax swindling, a fairly typical case was that of Lin Asi of Chaoyang county, Guangdong. Lin was an engraver (*kanzi jiang*). It wasn't much of a living, and in the summer of 1734 he decided to put his carving skills to a new use: making money off phony tax receipts. After forging the necessary documents and seals, he recruited three accomplices to go to the countryside around the county seat and contract with local inhabitants to pay their land taxes as proxies (*lanqi toushui*). Instead of going to the county yamen, however, they brought the tax money and deeds (which had to be stamped as proof of payment) back to Lin, who stamped the deed stubs with his phony seals. In this way the group was able to swindle the tax payments for twenty-eight properties, amounting to forty-three ounces of silver.[7]

FIGURE 5.1. Seal of Huang'an County, Hubei, 1738, with standard Manchu on the left and Chinese "nine-layered" seal script (*jiudie zhuanwen*) on the right. NGDK 155920 (QL 3.11, no day). Courtesy of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, Taiwan.

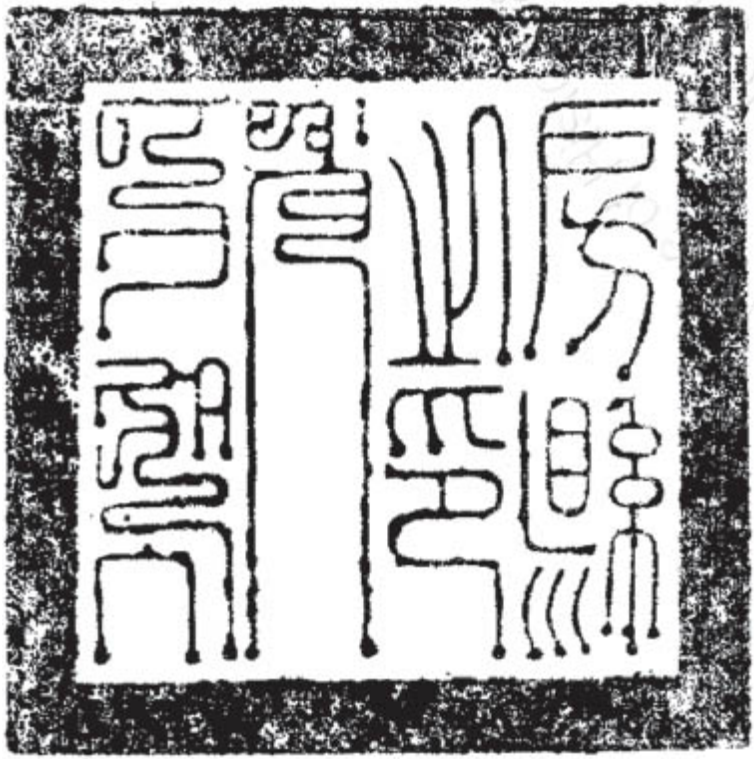

FIGURE 5.2. Seal of Fang County, Hubei, 1751, with both Manchu and Chinese in "hanging dew" seal script (*chuilu zhuan*). NGDK 155969 (QL 16.6.2). Courtesy of the Institute of History and Philology, Academia Sinica, Taiwan.

The desire for quick money also inspired what could be called "good news" scams. For a lucky few in Qing China, there were one or two occasions in life when messengers arrived with glad tidings that the emperor was conferring a special honor. The good news could be examination success, an honorary title, designation as a chaste widow,[8] or selection as a guest at the local "community drinking" ceremony.[9] Partaking in the happiness in a small way were the messengers, not only because they carried good news but also because the lucky honoree was expected to pay them "happiness money" (*xiqian* or *huahong qian*). It was this remuneration that inspired an entrepreneurial few to fabricate glad tidings when none were at hand.[10] Over the course of ten months in 1765–66, for example, three men from Fuping County, Shaanxi, used counterfeit honor announcements to collect gratuities in several locales in neighboring Gansu. Together or separately, they defrauded a *jiansheng*--by-purchase, two senior farmers (*laonong*),[11] two village elders (*qilao*),[12] two elderly guests (*qibin*) for the community banquet, and one chaste widow.[13] In a particularly bold case in 1773, a former Beijing

Gazette[14] copyist in Yangzhou forged notices announcing the promotions of three prefectural magistrates, hoping to benefit from the euphoric officials' largesse when he delivered the news at their respective yamens. (He did not get far.)[15]

Fake vouchers, or even seals alone, could be used to obtain salary payments or provisions. When the duke Junda sent an underling to collect his salary at a capital granary in November of 1724, officials there discovered that someone had already picked up some 125 piculs (*dan*) of rice in the duke's name two weeks previously, using a counterfeit seal.[16] In 1770, a soldier posing as a squad leader cashed bogus salary vouchers for his nonexistent men at two military post stations in Chuxiong County, Yunnan.[17]

Documents as Commodities

Another way to get money out of a document was to use it as collateral for a loan. This applied to both authentic documents and satisfactory counterfeits. On the authentic side, for example, in 1754 or 1755 an expectant vice-magistrate bought some silk clothing on credit at a Beijing tailor shop, incurring a debt of 285 ounces of silver. Unable to pay the sum as he prepared to go home to Shandong, he left his board-issued certificate of rank with the tailor as collateral. The tailor, in turn, subsequently gave it to a friend to use as collateral for a loan of two hundred ounces of silver.[18] With this transaction the certificate had effectively become a circulating financial instrument.

A counterfeit could serve the same purpose. In Beijing in 1729, an unemployed former shopkeeper named Zhao Dean sold some mules for Hu Wenchao, an acquaintance from Baoding, but spent the money himself. Hu pressed relentlessly for his money, fifteen ounces of silver. It so happened that Zhao had just forged a batch of *jiansheng* licenses, and he asked Hu to take a few in lieu of the silver. If he sold them he could keep the profits, and if not he could come back in few months when Zhao could give him his money. Hu went home with six licenses, which he knew to be fakes.[19]

One could also sell a document outright. The mysterious Shen Lan sold Zhu Sheng a jailor's appointment certificate for just under five ounces of silver. (A true salesman, he started by mentioning its "real value" of three hundred ounces of silver and then reeled in his quarry by slashing the price and agreeing to accept payment in two installments.)[20] Between 1742 and 1763, three "scoundrels" (*jianmin*) from Changle County, Fujian, sold five forged certificates of hereditary rank for three to six ounces of silver each, claiming they had been purchased from relatives of the original holders, who had died without heirs.[21] In 1790, two men sold nine bogus licenses (*chukou zhizhao*) permitting fishing off the coast of Amoy (Xiamen).[22]

Even a counterfeiter's printing blocks and seals could fetch money.

In the early Daoguang period, an engraver working for the Shandong superintendent of courier posts[23] ran a "good news" scam of the sort described above, printing counterfeit honorary title certificates for community banquet invitees and recruiting a pair of messengers to deliver and collect on the good news. After he died, the hirelings bought the printing blocks from his widow and carried on the tradition.[24]

The profit motive was also behind forgeries in which a document authorized one to engage in some profitable activity. Examples include the abovementioned Cai Yuanqing, who fabricated a Board of Revenue order to open a silver mine in Shanxi, and the carter Men Shilong, who forged a pass allowing him to haul goods without being stopped to pay customs duties.[25]

Free Travel

A second type of material motivation in counterfeiting cases was the need or desire for cheap (free, if possible) and unhindered travel, and especially long-distance travel. In Sichuan in 1776, for example, a Jiangxi native named Yang Yulu, who had served as a document copyist during the recent Jinchuan war, decided to leave Chongqing to sell saltpeter (*pixiao*).[26] To avoid difficulties along the way, he forged a couple of orders for transporting the bones (*gushi*) of dead soldiers back to their native places. This would not only discourage official questioning and searches along the way, Yang reasoned, but also compel jurisdictions through which he would pass to provide porters to help move his merchandise.[27] Few counterfeiters displayed Yang's particular ghoulishness, but travel needs similarly animated many of the impostors who claimed to be officials en route to their posts, deputies on special missions, or constables pursuing criminals into distant jurisdictions. Whether sponging off local gentry or merchants, demanding accommodations at courier stations, or registering for assistance at local yamens, these characters used bogus documents so that they could move across the land without having to spend their own money.

A related motivation was acquiring license to travel when it would otherwise have been forbidden or obstructed. This was the case for one Chen Ningxiang, who forged a license to pass a customs barrier in Houguan county, Fujian, and Xie Tingwang, a former teacher and trader who forged a merchant's travel pass (*luzhao*) to avoid difficulties as he returned home from Zhejiang to Jiangxi in 1754.[28] Freedom of movement was especially important for the five convicts in Wuan County, Henan, who forged a pair of amnesties to help them escape from military exile in 1802. The amnesties contained stern admonitions that officials not impede the men's progress (*bude tengno zuzhi*) and must "release them immediately upon inspection" (*jiyan*

fangxing).[29]

Beyond Money: Forgery for Status and Revenge

Other desires intertwined with the search for money. Some forgers were looking for prestige: the respect, honor, or "local glory" (*xiangli guangrong*) that flowed from official rank. This was typically an intermediate goal, the ultimate end being to use the enhanced status to secure loans or expense-free travel. A certificate of rank or title, for example, could impress intended victims with the bearer's status, inspiring admiration or fear and the material benefits that proceeded therefrom. So too could a mark of special favor from on high. Men Shilong, the carter from Shuntian who gave himself carte blanche to carry goods without interference from customs stations, was initially driven by status envy. The cart pass was outlandish, but Men had already done something worse. The trouble began when he found himself short of funds and had to sell two horses. His father would surely take him to task for this when he got home. Then Men began thinking back to some of the fine places he had seen in the course of his work. He had delivered foodstuffs to one prince's establishment and been hired several times to haul coal for another. He had seen many people wearing official hats with feathers marking high rank or special merit, and as he recalled these scenes envy led to an idea: he could claim that a prince had hired his cart and rewarded Men with honorary rank for his meritorious hauling (*qiche yougong*), entitling him to wear an official hat with a gold knob and blue plume.[30]

Proof would be needed. A gold hat knob bought on the way home took care of his father, and Men wore it when he went to make sacrifices at the ancestral graveyard. Then came the documents, first a certificate of rank and then the duty-free hauling pass. Men drew dragon borders on the certificate and wrote the words, "Vehicle of Shuntian prefecture Prince Jin's Chinese bannerman Men Shilong, recorded as meritorious and bestowed with seventh-rank hat knob to honor his person." He stamped it with a fake prefectural seal, made for the occasion by tracing an original seal stamp from one of his cartshafts and having an engraver's shop convert the copy into a wooden chop. It cost 2,000 cash, but when word of Men's good fortune got out (he distributed notices) the profits and congratulatory gifts came to nearly thirty ounces of silver.[31]

Pressure on the home front was the driving factor for a soldier who gave himself a promotion in 1775. Soon after the outbreak of the second Jinchuan war in 1771, Huang Zhanyuan had been assigned as a clerk with the southern route army. Four years later, many of his fellows had been promoted, and Huang's parents had written asking about his prospects. "In a moment of boldness," he wrote back that the general had already rewarded him with the rank of squad leader,

and he forged an official order (*weipai*) with the image of a vice-commander's seal on it. It was a poor copy, but Huang figured it would be good enough to deceive his family.[32]

Status envy or ambition also drove a special kind of forgery: that of calligraphy specimens supposedly bestowed by the emperor or a high official. The medicine seller Wang Zuo wanted an official title in the worst way. He had tried to purchase rank but lost 155 ounces of silver to a con man. In 1760 he met a fortune-teller named Li Dongsheng, who saw an official future for Wang and offered to accompany him to Beijing in search of a post. They were unsuccessful in the capital, however. Wang wanted to go home to Jurong County, Jiangsu, but felt that he could not face his stepfather empty-handed. Li suggested that he simply pretend to have acquired official rank, borrow money on the basis of that claim, and then purchase a real title. Persuaded, Wang bought a length of yellow damask silk (*huangling*) on which Li wrote the words "Imperially Bestowed Department Vice-Magistrate" (*Qinci zhou sima*). To make it convincing, Li also added the likeness of an imperial seal impression with the words "Qianlong calligraphy" (*Qianlong hanmo*). Back home in Jiangsu, Wang had the bogus imperial calligraphy announcing his new title carved in a horizontal tablet, which he planned to hang in his lineage's ancestral shrine. Impressed kinfolk would surely be willing to lend him money when they saw that. Unfortunately, he was arrested before he could install the tablet.[33]

This was not the only case featuring *bianshi*, calligraphy specimens bestowed for reproduction on horizontal tablets (*bian'e*) that could be hung over doorways or on interior walls.[34] Luo Fenpeng had forged two the year before when trying to impress his host at a temple in Hubei, and an aggregate memorial of 1745 reported two tablet forgeries in Fujian that year, one ascribed to an education official and the other to an unspecified personage.[35] The inspiration for Luo's forgery was the Qianlong emperor's southern tour of 1762. Similar was the case of Jiang Zheng, an escaped convict who forged an imperial edict on a collection of poems he claimed to have submitted at the time of the same tour. Jiang claimed the emperor had rewarded him with a hunting pouch and other items as well as exemption from punishment.[36]

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Not all forgeries were about money or status. Occasionally, the motivation was revenge. In 1735 a former brigade clerk at the Tiger Gate (Humen, the Bogue) fort outside Canton slipped two sets of accusations against the commanding officer into the official courier system, disguising the documents as reports from the provincial military commander's private secretaries. Dismissed nine years

previously for "disregarding the law" (*wanfa*, perhaps a reference to accepting bribes), He Dixun had subsequently opened a medicine shop near the fort, and often witnessed the harsh discipline there. Now his son was also "suffering its hardships" (*shou ta xinku*) as a servant in the brigade yamen, and He Dixun wanted to do something about it. In the space of three weeks he sent two fake "reports" (*bingtie*) to the provincial military commander and the governor-general, exposing the negligence and cruelty of the fort's commanding officer. His emotions were evident even in the false names he used to sign the documents: Mo Wenren ("inquire about compassion" or, including the surname, "Don't ask about compassion") and Wang Minnan (*minnan* as in "the people's difficulties").[37]

There was also the case of Lü Rongxi, who schemed to destroy a clerk at the Establishment of the Duke for Fulfilling the Sage (Yansheng Gongfu), the Kong lineage mansion in Qufu, Shandong, by delivering a bogus impeachment notice to the Board of Civil Appointments in Beijing.[38] Lü Rongxi and Zhou Shikai were scholars who had met when both were taking the Shandong provincial exams in 1756. Zhou went on to become a clerk at the duke's establishment, and in 1766 Lü went to see him. Zhou took him on as an assistant, noting, as he later deposed, that Lü "was literate" (*cu tong wenmo*).

The arrangement did not last. A few weeks later, Zhou told Lü to deliver 150 ounces of silver to the duke's establishment. The new assistant impertinently asked if he could forward only 100 ounces and keep the other 50 as a loan. Zhou refused and, when Lü got angry, dismissed him on the spot. Lü went home, but, unable to find work, he returned the following month. This time Zhou refused to see him, and even his servant treated Lü haughtily. (After his arrest more than a year later, a still-fuming Lü Rongxi would complain, "That Zhou Shikai, completely lacking in sentiment and righteousness [*qingyi*], would not even let me through the doorway.") Enraged, Lü shouted from outside, "You won't use me; I think this clerkship of yours won't last, either!" (*Ni buken yong wo, liao ni zhe guangou ye zuobucheng*). Subsequently, after learning that Zhou was involved in a property dispute, he forged an official communication in the duke's name, impeaching Zhou Shikai for "encouraging his servant to mistreat a good person [*wuliang*] and leaving his post without authorization to stir up a lawsuit in his native place." He traveled to Beijing and submitted the communication himself at the Board of Civil Appointments.[39]

The various goals in the forgery of official documents—money, travel, status, and, occasionally, revenge—were not mutually exclusive. Rather, many cases reveal an intertwining of two or more motives. Money facilitated travel. Status inspired respect, hospitality,

and the extension of loans. Vengeance repaid both insult and the economic hardship of dismissal from a post. Whatever the goal, seal-stamped documents lent credibility to their bearers, authenticating their identities, indicating official authority, and thereby providing access to resources that would not otherwise be available or forthcoming.

THE ACT OF FORGERY: SKILLS, METHODS, AND PERPETRATORS

For sentencing purposes in forgery cases, officials focused on identifying the mastermind, the writer, and, in cases featuring counterfeit seals, the carver. As a result, many case reconstructions described precisely how a bogus document came to be. Reading these narratives side by side shines light on the technical and social dynamics of counterfeiting in the Qing period.

Templates

Document, and especially seal, forgery required familiarity with the originals and technical skill to reproduce them. To begin with, as most official documents had specific forms and bore an official seal, the forger had to know what a legitimate document looked like. In short, he needed a template.

Official seals were not easy to come by. As noted above, the state carefully controlled their production, custody, and use. Once assigned, moreover, a seal rarely left its yamen compound. Officials could not generally carry seals on their persons, but had to keep them in secure locations within the yamen walls.[40] (Seals were engraved with the name of the office, not the official.) The seal, then, the metal or wooden object that officials stamped on their documents, was beyond the sight and grasp of all but a few authorized persons in the yamen.

Documents bearing official seal *stamps*, however, were everywhere. The state was quite helpful in this regard, as any number of original document types were in wide circulation, almost begging to be counterfeited. Most readily available were the ubiquitous tax payment receipt stubs, which farmers obtained every time they paid their taxes. Yamen runners' arrest warrants and summonses were also quite common, and thousands of men possessed certificates of brevet rank. Anyone with past clerical experience in a yamen (and clerks were legion) would have seen various documents, and some active yamen employees could be persuaded or duped into providing a desired form. Last but certainly not least, official seals were stamped prominently on proclamations and other public notices (*gaoshi*) posted at yamen gates, marketplaces, and other busy thoroughfares all over China.

Many case reports noted exactly how the counterfeiters acquired their templates. Proclamations were the most convenient source for seal impressions, which could be copied and then transferred to whatever document the forger wanted to create. The preferred method

was to approach a proclamation under cover of darkness and cut out or tear off the portion bearing the official seal. This was how Lin Asi came by one of his seals.[41] The convict Zhu Yazhao, "taking advantage of free time" (*cheng kong*), swiped a whole proclamation from the street.[42]

For those without ready access to a public notice, there were other ways to secure a seal impression. A stray or discarded official envelope bearing the originating yamen's seal would suffice: Hou Yuanxun copied the seal on a used bamboo envelope (*fengtong*) his father had left behind after being dismissed from his post as a magistrate's private secretary, and a White Lotus-era mercenary named Li Ronghua discovered an envelope stamped with the seal of the Sichuan provincial military commander among some papers at the bottom of a rice basket.[43] Lin Asi's other template was very close at hand: he copied the county magistrate's seal from his own door placard.[44] Men Shilong copied the Shuntian prefectural seal from the identification strip (*fengtiao*) conveniently pasted on his cart at the time of an official levy.[45] To authenticate his bogus prince's edict, Wang Baozhu used a prince's seal found on a copy of the Heart Sutra (Xin jing).[46] Feng Zishi, a forger of *jiansheng* credentials, copied the provincial administration commissioner's seal stamped on a painting of Heavenly Master Zhang, the hereditary Daoist patriarch.[47]

As for documents, the ideal template was an original specimen complete with the appropriate official seal or seals. When two farmers schemed to print and sell counterfeit calendars in 1735, they got an acquaintance to acquire an original, freshly printed but not yet distributed, from the Imperial Astronomical Bureau (Qintian Jian).[48] A seal carver named Wang Zengcai was able to buy a warrant or errand ticket form (*piaoshi*) at an unspecified location, although he still had to swipe a seal stamp from a county proclamation.[49] Similarly, a runaway servant named Chen Deshi bought errand forms (*pai, paipiao*) at a paper store, filling them in as mission directives (*zhafu*) for himself and others.[50] The money changer Wu Fengyi's template (indeed, his inspiration) for return-to-camp orders was an original that a soldier had deposited at his shop.[51] When Cheng Cangyu and Yu Wenzhong wanted to forge *jiansheng* licenses, they were able to scrutinize originals by borrowing them under false pretenses, one from the wife of a deceased relative and the other from a yamen clerk. Ironically, each man lied that he knew a *jiansheng* purchaser who suspected his license was a forgery and wanted to compare it with an authentic document.[52]

Another alternative, far less common, judging from the archival record, was to alter an existing document.[53] The vengeful Lü Rongxi did this when forging an impeachment notice in Qufu in 1767. Lü

acquired a basic notification template by paying for two ceremonial licenses at the duke's establishment, receiving two notifications for the Board of Rites. Carefully opening one of the envelopes by moistening it with cooking wine, he removed the document and cut out the middle leaf containing the notification text. Next he took a blank sheet of paper, glued it in between the original side leaves which bore the date and the ducal establishment's seal impression, and wrote in new contents impeaching the clerk who had dismissed him. Then, on the envelope, he removed the character for "rites" and replaced it with that for "officials." A licensing notice for the Board of Rites had now become an impeachment notice for the Board of Civil Appointments.[54]

Techniques

Templates were only the beginning. Forging a document, and especially the seal, required tools and media. Brush, ink, and paper were indispensable, of course, and for the average official document all three could be purchased easily. Brushes, for example, were available at shops or even from itinerant sellers.[55] Paper, including the high-quality *maotouzhi* used for formal board notifications and certificates of rank, could also be bought at a shop, although one might have to go far to find it.[56]

Paper and ink ready and brush in hand, one could draw up the document, following a template if necessary to get the wording right, and add any requisite borderlines or more complex patterns. All of this was fairly straightforward, and seemed to pose no great challenge to those who could read, write, and acquire a template. Many forgers, particularly those who wanted to create more than one copy, went further and carved their own printing blocks.

Now came the crux of the matter: the seal. There were two basic ways to forge a seal impression. One was to simply trace or copy the likeness of one onto the paper, the other was to produce a new seal and stamp it on the document. The latter method was more complicated, laborious, and time consuming, but the results were more convincing, and most forgers chose this technique. Not having access to palace or provincial government workshops, seal counterfeiters had to come up with their own solutions. Tools and media were not very difficult to come by, but executing a convincing likeness did require skill and attention to detail. An engraving knife (*kezi dao*) was essential. Wood and stone blocks were the most readily available carving media, and most counterfeiters used one or the other (wood far more often than stone, presumably because it was easier to carve and to destroy after use). These were not the most easily worked surfaces, however, and criminal confessions also reveal the use of more malleable substitutes. The most popular alternative was dried beancurd.[57] Beeswax was another, and at least one forger carved his

seal on a turnip, another on a yam.[58] Chen Deshi fabricated two official seals, one from clay mixed with cotton filling from his clothing and the other using mud and putty (*youhui*).[59]

Document forms and seal characters had to be carved backwards, of course, so that they would be comprehensible on the finished product. The standard procedure was to paste the model text, written on paper, onto the surface of the printing block and carve out the open spaces around the character strokes. Lastly, one had to get the seal's ink color (*yinse*) right: the proper shade of red or purple to match the color of a true official seal. It was possible to buy ink ready-made,[60] but many counterfeiters seem to have mixed it themselves using various dyes, powders, and oils.[61]

All of this was best done in secrecy. Stealing seal impressions, copying text, tracing seals and border designs, carving printing blocks, mixing dyes, and endorsing documents; these were not activities one could engage in publicly. They had to be done discreetly, away from prying eyes. Thus we find that counterfeiters often worked at night or in remote locations. The seal on a proclamation was torn away under cover of darkness, when the streets were quiet and visibility diminished.[62] Hou Yuanxun "waited till the quiet of night" to forge a magistrate's seal.[63] Chen Jishu did his work in the middle of the night,[64] as did Chen Deshi when fabricating one of his seals.[65] Luo Zhengxiu, drawing up his fake announcements at the inn where he was staying, dared not work during the day lest he be discovered. He waited till night, and closed the doors before he started.[66]

As with darkness, so with quiet. Zhu Shifa took his seal-carving materials to an empty temple in open country, and closed the doors. When the seal was ready a coconspirator arranged a secret meeting with a yamen clerk, who provided a blank warrant. Zhu's confession described the brief, clandestine wedding of document and seal:

> At noon Lu Xian took me to an empty building outside the yamen . . . to wait for Clerk Liu to come out. When we had met, Lu Xian went out, locked the door, and stood [guard]. Clerk Liu brought out a fake warrant . . . and I showed him the fake seal. Clerk Liu produced some ink he had brought and, taking the fake seal I'd carved, rubbed it red and stamped it on the warrant. . . . I put the seal away and knocked on the door. Lu Xian heard the knock and unlocked the door, and we all scattered.[67]

Others were equally secretive. After swiping the magistrate's seal stamp from a notice board, the convict Zhu Yazhao took it back to his quarters in an empty temple to produce his bogus amnesties.[68] The seal carver Wang Zengcai went to "a remote place" to carve a fake county seal for a bogus arrest warrant.[69] Zhong Jieyuan chose his

ancestral graveyard, across the provincial border from his current home. There was an old work shed there, and the spot was extremely remote and quiet.[70] Cheng Cangyu did his carving in an empty, locked, and neighborless building on a mountain in southern Anhui.[71]

Perpetrators: The Social Dynamics of Counterfeiting

Counterfeiting government documents required certain types of institutional knowledge and technical skill. Arrest warrants and other directives, for example, tended to contain particular kinds of information and to be endorsed (*biaopan*) in red ink with special code characters, dots, lines, circles, and check marks, all at specific locations on the document (figure 4.1).[72] A proper "good news" notice would be stamped with a provincial courier service seal and might include the text of the imperial edict or other order conferring the honor. A certificate of *jiansheng* rank contained specific wording and was printed on special paper and stamped with a board seal.

These and other document attributes certainly posed challenges for the would-be counterfeiter, but case records show a wide range of people who were sufficiently skilled, experienced, or socially connected to try their hands at it. In those cases in which extant records identify the perpetrators, twenty-nine offenders are simply identified as commoners (*min*), persons (*ren*), or, in three cases, bannermen of a given locale. Vague as they are, these terms indicated common people, not officials or even official underlings. Another five are characterized as scoundrels or "bare sticks" (*guanggun*), brigands (*feifan*), or "treacherous persons" (*jiantu*). In those cases for which the extant records provide more specific identities, the largest groups represented are former clerks and runners (ten), professional engravers or seal carvers (eight), scholars (six, including students, teachers, and lower degree holders), and merchants (six, including shopkeepers, traders, and peddlers). The list also includes three monks and a Daoist priest, two fortune-tellers, two scribes (*daishu*), a litigation master, a member of an official's household, a medical practitioner, a blacksmith, a silversmith, a gambler, and a laborer.

This was virtually a cross section of Qing China's nonfarming male population, but weighted toward the literate and the skilled. It also reflected the multifaceted nature of seal carving in late imperial society. Calligraphy and engraving were different technical skills. Many people could write, but few could write well and fewer still knew how to engrave characters. When a literatus or anyone else paid an engraver to carve a seal, he or she was engaging in a centuries-old practice reflecting a technical and occupational divide between scholars and skilled artisans. Calligraphy was a cultured art associated with scholar-officials (*shi* in the ideal social hierarchy dating at least to the Han period [202 BCE–220 CE]), while engraving was the work

of artisans (*gong* or *jiang*). On the other hand, by the Qing period seal carving had become an important part of literati culture. This was an extension of a gradual trend, dating to the Song and Yuan, in which seal impressions became integral components of poetry and painting composition. From the mid-Ming onward, exquisite artistry was becoming a path to literati status for talented engravers.[73] At the same time, growing numbers of scholars were embracing seal connoisseurship and carving itself as cultured pursuits.[74] In other words, seal-carving skills were spreading to the educated elite. They also retained their usefulness in popular society, and practical everyday engraving persisted as a profession.[75]

Thus, depending on the social background and economic needs of the practitioner, engraving could be a livelihood or a pastime, profession or passion. Indeed, with the increasing population, expanding commercial economy, and continuing spread of functional literacy in the postconquest period, it is probable that in the eighteenth century seal carvers, professional and amateur, were more numerous than ever before in Chinese history. Little wonder, then, that counterfeiting cases involved not only professional craftsmen or artisans (*kanzi jiang, kezi jiang*) but also, and in comparable numbers, a range of literate persons who had "long practiced character engraving" (*su xi kezi*) or "studied seal carving since youth" (*zi you xue ke tuzhang*).[76]

The variety of perpetrators' social and occupational backgrounds intersects with something else the case records reveal about the social and technical dynamics of forgery. Although there certainly were individuals who acted alone, counterfeiting tended to be a group endeavor with each participant contributing his own special skill or talent. These skills and talents included acquiring templates, drafting and calligraphic skill, engraving, printing, properly endorsing the document, and carrying out the deception once the forgery was complete.[77]

The division of labor could be simple or complex and involve conspiracy, labor for hire, or some combination of the two. The creation of Cai Yuanqing's counterfeit board order combined elements of conspiracy and uninformed paid labor. Cai got a fortune-teller friend to do the writing because his own calligraphy was "not presentable" (*buhaojian*), but he paid an engraver's shop to carve the seal.[78]

The conspiracy type is well illustrated by the case of Quan Jihua, a wineshop proprietor who posed as a governor-general's inspector and also organized a good news scam. Quan was a Shaanxi native living in Guyuan Department, Gansu. He knew an official messenger named Wang Baoshan. One day in the fall of 1765 Wang came to Guyuan to

deliver good news at the home of a military degree candidate. He invited Quan to go along and gave him three-hundred *wen* of the announcement money they received. "It occurred to me," Quan later confessed, "that a phony announcer or errand runner [*chai*] could cheat people out of money. Wang said that to pose as one on an errand one must have proof, and so I thought of a fake order."[79]

One of Quan's customers at the wineshop was a medical practitioner named Feng Yuzu, who also hailed from Shaanxi. Feng lived with two other Shaanxi natives, a scribe named Yuan Delu and a dismissed yamen clerk named Zhang Junchun. Quan invited them all to a restaurant, introduced the messenger, and made a proposal: he wanted to commit extortion by posing as a governor-general's errand runner inspecting for illegal brewing operations, and he asked his friends to fabricate an official order and envelope. Zhang Junchun, the former yamen clerk, later recalled the conversation in his confession:

> Our first reaction was to refuse. Quan Jihua said this couldn't be done by one person, and we could all split the money he swindled. That is when Feng Yuzu pointed at me and said, "You've been a clerk. You must be able to draft an order. Yuan Delu has also been at the yamen and served as a scribe, so naturally he could make a copy. I've carved seals, so I could carve the block for the envelope." . . . Wang Baoshan added that the envelope would have to have a seal in order to look real. Feng Yuzu said, "That I can't do." Wang Baoshan said, "Country bumpkins are easy to cheat; how could they tell the difference? . . . When we'd finished talking each went to work.[80]

This account shows a clear division of labor with each man, by virtue of his particular skill or experience, holding one of the keys to a successful deception. Quan was the mastermind who would do the walking and talking. Wang, the messenger, was his inspiration and the voice of practical experience who knew what kind of documentation would be needed. Zhang, the dismissed clerk, would draft the inspection order, Yuan, the scribe, would write it up properly, and Feng, the doctor with engraving experience, would carve the seal.

The hired labor dynamic is evident in the abovementioned calendar counterfeiting case of 1735. The mastermind, Xing Huozi, a farmer in Jiaohe County, outside Beijing, recruited Lu Pengcheng, another farmer, to help him print and sell copies of the coming year's official calendar, which had not yet been issued.[81] Lu traveled to the capital and paid a printer he knew there to find a copy. This printer knew another who worked at the Astronomical Bureau, and paid him for one of the Bureau's freshly printed calendars. Back in Jiaohe a few days later, Xing Huozi asked an engraver friend to carve the cover seal

and paid another engraver, who specialized in door-god pictures, to carve the printing blocks for the entire calendar. When all was ready, Xing separately hired two book printers (*shuayin shu de*) to make six thousand copies, and sold the lot to a bookstore. Subsequently, under interrogation, both of these printers declared that they were *illiterate*, and officials accepted these claims at face value. Whether or not they truly were illiterate, it is evident that the simpler act of printing (*shuayin*; literally, "brushing and pressing") was of a lower order than engraving (*kezi*, "carving characters"). In short, the production of these counterfeits involved not only labor for hire but also a clear technical and occupational hierarchy.

Amenable Engravers

From the professional engraver's standpoint, carving an official seal for a civilian who wandered in from the street was obviously illegal. Case narratives illuminate the dynamics involved in getting an engraver to take the job. Some simply obliged, no questions asked. Others refused at first but then succumbed to the lure of money or other forms of persuasion. When Cai Yuanqing was forging his Board of Revenue order in 1764, he had to go to an engraver's shop for the seal. Worried that an engraver would not dare to carve it, he remembered that the Board superintendent, Grand Secretary Fuheng, also held the noble title "Loyal and Brave" (Zhongyong Gong).[82] Proceeding to a seal carver's shop in Beijing's East Four Arches neighborhood, Cai told the engravers he had recently opened a tobacco shop and wanted to carve a distinctive wooden seal to stamp on the pouches. Since Lord Fu's household always got its tobacco at his shop, he explained, it would help him stand out from the competition if the seal could read, "The Loyal and Brave grants good fortune" (*Zhongyong ciji*). The engravers were quick to comply.[83]

Begging could also be useful. Once he had decided to sell fake return-to-camp orders for sick troops, Wu Fengyi copied an original deposited at his shop and then paid an engraver to carve two seals and a printing block for the order forms (*paishi*). The engraver initially refused, but gave in when Wu beseeched him with a tall tale about the originals being lost in a fire at his home. If he could not replace them, he explained, he would face terrible consequences at the yamen.[84] The engraver Shi Lü also refused when Li Yuan and Lin Siting first appeared at his home asking him to forge the seal of a subprefectural magistrate, for use on licenses permitting settlers to cross from Amoy to Taiwan. Li softened him up, however, with a story about how a friend had left his license with him for safekeeping and Li had somehow lost it. The friend would be furious if he found out. Li only needed to use the seal once, and would certainly destroy it after he had done so. He also offered to pay the engraver 140 *wen* for labor

and provide wine to show his gratitude. Shi carved the seal.[85]

That some professional seal carvers were not overly concerned about the content of their work orders is further suggested by the case of Luo Zhengxiu, the dismissed gazette copyist and unsuccessful fortune-teller who needed a seal to authenticate his counterfeit Beijing Gazette announcements. Luo wanted one that would read "Seal of Lin Jingnan, Henan Superintendent of Courier Posts, stationed in the capital" (*Henan zhu jing titang guan Lin Jingnan qianji*). Fearing rejection and exposure if he simply asked the engraver's shop to carve such a seal, he cleverly spread the work piecemeal across six visits, each time requesting no more than four characters: first Henan, then *zhu jing titang, guan*, Lin Jingnan, *qian*, and finally *ji*. Having thus evaded whatever vigilance might have existed at the engraver's and collected all of the necessary characters, Luo glued the pieces together with pine resin to form a complete seal.[86]

ARENAS OF DECEPTION: PASSING THE COUNTERFEIT

Once a forgery was complete, the moment of deception was at hand. Counterfeits went into play in diverse social and institutional arenas. The most basic distinction was between official and popular victims. Most forgeries were meant for use outside the official system, to trick common people into giving up private wealth. This was generally the case with forged receipts for proxy tax remittance, arrest warrants, and certificates of official rank. Other counterfeits were meant to deceive officials or their underlings. This occurred with vouchers or requisitions, which enabled the bearer to obtain money, silver, or grain rations under false pretenses (*maozhi*); some warrants, with which a phony constable could register for assistance at yamens in neighboring provinces; and official communications such as interagency notifications and reports.

The nature of the target dictated the specific path a given document would take. Among common people, the helpful proxy tax remitter would collect a farmer's land deed stub and tax payment, take them to some quiet place where he could stamp a bogus county seal on the stub, and return the latter to the unsuspecting owner. Phony constables would show their victim a bogus arrest warrant (if they bothered to use one), extort their fee, and disappear with the money. Phony messengers would announce the good news of an honor bestowed by the throne, showing the supposed honoree a copy of the edict, and depart with a few hundred cash in "happiness money." The wily false official would show his bogus certificate or token of imperial favor to his hosts, enjoy the food, lodging, and clothing they provided and spend the money they loaned him, and then move on when they became suspicious or pressed for repayment.

When officials or yamen clerks were the intended dupes, the

document could take one of two paths to the yamen. Most common was direct delivery or presentation by the forger himself, walking to the gates with a calling card if he wanted to visit the magistrate, presenting a voucher at a revenue office to misappropriate funds or provisions, registering his bogus arrest warrant if he was playing constable. The other path, not as common but ideal when the forgery was supposed to be an official communication, was delivery via the official courier system.[87]

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Forgeries reflected political and administrative realities, and also popular perceptions of those realities. Certain types of documents, moreover, suggest the ways in which certain institutions attracted and lent themselves to fraud. They also show us the contours of specific arenas of deception.

Comparison of bogus imperial, princely, and governors' orders, for example, reveals a striking correspondence to the Qing power structure. There are thirty-six such commands in my sample, five supposedly issued by princes, twice that number (eleven) from provincial governors (or governors-general), and double again (twenty) from the emperor. At first sight, it seems odd that governors and governors-general would have outrun princes, but the paucity of princely orders reflected the structure of political power in the Qing order. Princes enjoyed high social status and could wield influence, but their authority did not extend to conferring official titles, forgiving tax obligations, pardoning criminals (all imperial prerogatives), or managing provincial affairs and appointing investigators and other deputies (governors' functions). The contents of the bogus princes' orders reflected these limitations. One authorized its bearers to use official courier stations and the others authorized a new mining operation, the monitoring of a lumber shipment, reassignment of a salt brokerage license, and settling of a property dispute.[88] These were mainly commercial matters (and even here, the frauds were overstepping the normal bounds of princely authority), while the range of imperial and governors' edicts was much broader.

Tax remittance schemes unfolded in a very different context. The engraver Lin Asi's bogus seals were good enough for trusting "country bumpkins," but did not pass muster with a county clerk. Lin's scheme and its undoing both point to the pivotal role of knowledge and experience in fraud cases. Like the phony policeman, his technical skill and knowledge of the yamen's workings placed him somewhere between officialdom and the people he defrauded. And like police impersonation, proxy taxpaying schemes spoke to the perennial problem of a minimalist bureaucracy presiding over a large agrarian population. Regular officials could not do everything, even with teams

of clerks and runners, and fee-taking intermediaries sprang up between state and populace. This was especially so with regard to tax collection, where long distances and conflicting interests separated thinly staffed county yamens from their tax-paying hinterlands.[89]

Lin Asi and others like him were mimicking a common service; namely, collecting a small fee in return for saving a farming household the time and expense of a trip to the county seat. This was technically illegal (farmers were expected to pay their taxes in person unless the distance was great and the quota less than an ounce of silver), but even so it was a popular alternative to making the journey and suffering the predations of yamen personnel.[90] Such services, and the fraudulent schemes that mirrored them, took place where there were gaps or gray areas in the system and where government policing was weak.

The "good news" delivery was a positive variation on the police shakedown and proxy tax payment. Where the constable extorted money in exchange for granting a victim his freedom and the proxy tax remitter helped fulfill an onerous obligation, the good news messenger opened purses by giving his victims cause for celebration. Good news scams were not random deceptions. The perpetrators mimicked the official notification system, and most of them commandeered it by learning the names of imminent honorees in advance, writing them in on fake notices, and then briefly occupying the messenger's ground between state and society to siphon off the collection fees. By trafficking in honor notices, frauds such as these were capitalizing on deeply entrenched social ideals and a local bureaucratic mechanism the imperial state had created to support them. The mid-Qing state in particular was especially diligent in honoring the aged and the chaste, and phony messengers worked institutional routes that had been systematically paved and widened by the Kangxi, Yongzheng, and Qianlong emperors.[91] Imitating an official operation at the lowest edges of the central-provincial communication system, they were also benefiting from the widespread desire for prestige titles in a status-driven society.

The carter Men Shilong's adventure combined elements of poverty, business strategizing, familial relations, status desire, and a hauler's dream of unhindered and duty-free travel. Specifically, Men's occupation led him into several kinds of encounter with the Qing state. One was being hired to transport food and coal for princely establishments, where he would have seen, at the very least, the impressive outer walls, gates, and rooftops. There he also witnessed the comings and goings of well-clad personages, many of them wearing official hats with knobs of high rank and feathers honoring outstanding contributions to the dynastic cause. A second, more

mundane encounter was having his wagon levied by the prefectural government, with a special label pasted on it to indicate the official nature of the mission. Lastly, Men would have been all too familiar with the customs stations and duties he faced whenever he took to the road. Sailing through with a golden hat knob and blue plume must have seemed far more attractive than waiting to be searched and charged, and the official transport label on his cart inspired visions of an even better document, a free transit pass, to bridge the gap between dream and reality. The dream was certainly fanciful, but it was also grounded in the here and now of Men's life. He did not really want to be an official, but wished to be respected and left alone when hauling his goods. He also wanted to stay on his father's good side.

Higher up the social scale, similar dynamics were at work in the forgery of an eminent person's calligraphy. When the scholar Luo Fenpeng sold his own work in his own name, he was engaging in a common activity that was culturally and economically meaningful but politically benign. Later, however, when he adopted a succession of official identities and forged a specimen of a prefect's calligraphy listing titles and gifts conferred by the emperor, he was climbing the status ladder and infusing his brush with political authority. Wang Zuo played the same game when he went home with a conferral-of-office notice, stamped with a bogus imperial seal, and turned it into a horizontal tablet. The fake imperial calligraphy on Jiang Zheng's poetry collection served a similar purpose. These artifacts were not the typical stuff of everyday business at the local yamen but tangible markers of high favor, to be displayed prominently in private homes and lineage halls. They were status symbols of a very high order, intended to impress their viewers (hosts, relatives, officials at a place of exile) and encourage them to extend hospitality, loans, or other favorable treatment.

Counterfeits could also reflect the distinctive political and economic circumstances of specific locations. The early 1790s appear to have been rough years for official proclamations in the Amoy area. A Haicheng county police chief's (*xunjian*) seal was cut out from its proclamation in 1790, and two subprefectural proclamations on the Amoy city walls lost their seals in 1790 and 1791, respectively.[92] All three seals were used as counterfeiting templates, one for licenses for sojourners (*kemin*) to travel to Taiwan, one for offshore fishing licenses, and one for soldiers' rice vouchers (*mipiao*). The rice ticket scam could have taken place anywhere. The phony licenses, however, reflected the distinctive economic and political environment of the Fujian coast in the middle Qing. The prohibition on offshore fishing (harbor fishing was permissible) related to the problem of piracy, which was raging along the coast in the late Qianlong years.[93] Not

only were the fishing licenses bogus, but the very existence of fishing licenses was a fantasy, dreamed up precisely because there was a prohibition in place. The counterfeiters correctly anticipated that dupes could be found if they put out the word that the government had changed its policy. Licenses for the crossing to Taiwan did exist and were required, and Amoy was the main port of transit in the booming travel and trade links between the mainland and Taiwan.[94] The counterfeit crossing permit, therefore, also catered to popular demand. Thus, counterfeiters took inspiration from specific circumstances created by official prohibitions and popular desires at a specific place and time.

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To fool a commoner was one thing, to deceive an official or his clerks another. By attempting it, the forger entered an entirely different arena, radically altering the balance of knowledge and experience between predator and prey. Officials and yamen staff knew their own system, and those who wanted to deceive them needed to bring comparable knowledge or talent to the encounter. Engraving skill and previous yamen experience were empowering, and inattentiveness among current yamen staff could help from the other side.

In addition, the official courier system was a potential weak spot in the state's defenses. The shopkeeper He Dixun used local courier posts to submit his "reports" on the regional vice-commander at Tiger Gate. He delivered his first report in person at a brigade station that was not, it turned out, a model of vigilance and good record keeping. In theory three soldiers were on duty, but when He arrived one had been called to drill on the parade ground and another was cooking in the kitchen at the back of the station. The remaining soldier was present but in bed, mortally ill. Surveying this terrain, He called out ostentatiously, "This report is from the provincial military commander's private secretary. It's from the last relay station and should be delivered promptly." With that, he laid his forgery on the table and left. The sick soldier heard him but did not rise, and could not include the date or the messenger's name when he recorded the document in the station's register. Moments later a courier from another station happened to come in to rest, and he agreed to deliver the document when told it was an "important" (*jinyaode*) report for the provincial military commander. The forgery was now moving through the system.[95]

He Dixun wormed his accusations into the courier network by disguising them as reports from high provincial officials' private secretaries. When Feng Zishi and his associates wanted to deliver counterfeit Board notifications to the Hunan governor's yamen, they intercepted a southbound courier and asked if he would "take some

documents along" (*shao dai wenshu*), offering to pay three ounces of silver for the favor. The courier refused at first, but agreed when the frauds promised they would "naturally" take responsibility should anything go wrong.[96]

A much bolder set of deceptions took place in the early 1730s, when an exceptionally talented and well-informed counterfeiter named Kong Chuanyi forged a succession of communications supposedly emanating from the establishment of the Duke for Fulfilling the Sage.[97] After fabricating ceremonial licenses for seven Yangzhou residents, Kong followed up with the requisite notifications from the duke to the Yangzhou prefect. A go-between delivered one, and one of the purchasers got a county yamen clerk he knew to deliver another. The first notice got through without difficulty, but the second was spotted as a forgery. The prefect opened an investigation and sent an inquiry to Shandong.

When he learned that his counterfeit notification had been detected, Kong's response was, "No problem, I know what to do" (*Bufangshi, wo zi you jiuying*). What followed was a bewildering, two-year-long game of documentary cat and mouse in which Kong managed to intercept communications between the duke's establishment and various Jiangsu authorities, replacing them with fictions of his own creation. His bogus response to the prefect's initial inquiry explained that the licenses in question were all legitimate but a "scoundrel" had forged the notification and subsequently been brought to justice. Kong enclosed a new, "authentic," notification and, posing as a *shengyuan*, travelled from Shandong to Yangzhou and delivered the forgeries to the prefectural yamen himself. Another forgery advised that "[these] innocent men who were [incorrectly] implicated should all be released and the case closed." Accepting these communications at face value, the Yangzhou prefect did indeed close the case.

Kong Chuanyi could not seem to resist an opportunity for profit, however, and before long he had forged four more licenses and sent a bogus notification to the Jiangsu provincial administration commissioner. When the latter, suspecting that the ducal seal had been counterfeited, sent an inquiry to Shandong,[98] Kong caught wind of it and forged another response, assuming the duke's voice to provide assurances that the document was authentic:

> Now, reading the master registers, I find that truly it was this establishment's seal and there was no falsity or theft. As for the Manchu and Chinese seal scripts being sloppy, perhaps the strength of the ink color was uneven; there is no need to suspect anything else.

All of this activity required access to yamens and to the courier

system. Kong's precise identity is a mystery, but his intimate knowledge of the ducal establishment strongly points to previous employment there as a clerk or private secretary. He also understood the workings of the courier system, which he and his associates (including two victims who became coconspirators) manipulated through a combination of deceit and bribery. They knew at least one yamen clerk, and on at least two occasions they persuaded courier post soldiers to hold onto "erroneous" documents which they subsequently replaced with "correct" ones, after providing bogus recall orders (*zhuipai*) and rewarding the soldiers handsomely.

Kong finally ran out of luck in the summer of 1732, when he was identified by a victim and jailed before he could tie up the rapidly multiplying loose ends. His exploits were a breathtakingly extreme case, but like Feng Zishi's and He Dixun's they point to weak links in the official communications network. One negligent, ill, venal, or naïve station-man or courier could compromise the system by arresting the forward movement of a legitimate document or introducing a fake one into the stream.

In each of these arenas, popular or official, the document was the centerpiece in a deceptive ensemble, employed to confirm a false identity or story. The proxy tax remitter left with money and returned with an endorsed payment receipt, leading the victim to assume that he had gone to the local yamen and paid the taxes as promised. The phony constable informed his victim he had been identified as an accomplice in commission of some crime and showed him the warrant, physical proof that the bearer was a constable and had been authorized to make the arrest. Since the messengers declaring that someone had received an honor carried the text of the edict, it stood to reason that the good news was true. The soldier appeared to collect his rice and silver, and there was the voucher, right in his hand. The traveler on the doorstep might look common, but the document seemed to confirm his identity as an expectant, honorary, or retired official, or a recent appointee proceeding to his post. In all of these schemes, the frauds played credible roles and furnished supporting documentation, leading their victims to fill in the rest of the stories with their own assumptions. Whether a victim fell for a ruse depended on his or her own knowledge, wisdom, and instincts.

DETECTION, CLOSURE, AND PERSISTENCE

The eighteenth century, the height of the evidential scholarship (*kaozheng*) movement, may not have been the best of times for passing counterfeit documents. Educated eyes were keenly focused on problems of textual authenticity and methods of evaluation, and the movement had even extended to seal connoisseurship.[99] More mundanely, probably few people could spot a counterfeit seal more

readily than the yamen clerks and officials who handled official documents every day. Case reports often described what was wrong with the document, and taken together these descriptions show some of the challenges counterfeiters faced and the mistakes they tended to make.

Seals stamps were the primary sites of detection. The main problem areas were script, color, shape, and size. The stamps on the *jiansheng* licenses that officials found in Feng Zishi's home, for example, were obvious counterfeits. The ink was dull, the corners too sharp, and both the Manchu and Chinese characters for (the Board of) Revenue were incorrect.[100] Officials detected two of Kong Chuanyi's forgeries because the characters on the seals were "all wrong" or uneven (*ju shu chuanmiu*) and "sloppy and incorrect" (*liaocao cuowu*), respectively."[101] When a shopkeeper showed officials the *jiansheng* license Zhong Jieyuan had given him, they could see that the seal color was too deep and the license format itself was incorrect.[102] The prince's seal stamp on Men Shilong's license was a bit too long. In addition, the character scripts, although resembling Manchu and Chinese, were "neither regular nor cursive" (*fei kai fei xing*), and some strokes were missing.[103] Size was the first clue with Luo Dasheng's fake treasury receipts and notifications: the provincial seals were too small, the county seals too large.[104]

Seal impressions aside, a document's wording, endorsing notations, ink, and outer envelope could all betray a forgery. The notifications that Feng Zishi inserted in a courier's delivery bag invited suspicion on several fronts. First, they were loose in the outer bag instead of being fixed in the same packet with the other documents. Second, the writing was in a different hand, and neither the ink nor the Manchu and Chinese scripts on the seals matched those on the other documents.[105] When He Dixun delivered his second report on the Bogue fort commander at a different courier station, the soldiers there immediately suspected forgery because there were no vermilion endorsements on the envelope and it bore the oddly informal notation *fan* (to trouble, as in "trouble you to deliver this").[106] When Gao Bisheng's cousin tried to give him a counterfeit certificate of hereditary title, Gao noticed that the paper was new and the ink fresh, strange qualities for a document that had supposedly been handed down through generations.[107] There was also the case of Wang Chaosheng, the monk turned laborer who posed as a squad leader deputed to search "barbarian" (*yiren*) villages in Yongshan County, Yunnan. Wang's very first target saw through the ruse the moment he presented a letter written in vermilion ink, which only the emperor was entitled to use. Wang also carried strange documents bearing the official seal of his alleged father and commander, "General Han," a

nonexistent personage based on Marshal Han (Han Yuanshuai), a character Wang remembered from a dramatic performance.[108]

Other forgeries came to light because the missions they authorized were not in keeping with established policies or procedures. Feng Zishi dated his bogus Board notifications the twenty-sixth of the month, whereas regular Board practice was to send such notices on the fifth.[109] Qi Qige's sham lumber mission of 1733 was doomed both by the improper seal on his bogus prince's order and the fact, noted by suspicious provincial officials, that princes were not known to send agents to Shanxi.[110] The merchant Chen Dechang fared equally poorly in Jiangxi in 1748. His props (an official hat, special lanterns on his boat, and a travel document supposedly issued by an imperial prince) amounted to nothing because the mission did not make sense: as everyone from the emperor to local prefects seemed to know, princes were not involved in the procurement of palace lumber.[111] A similar fate awaited Luo Zhengxiu, who tried to collect "happiness money" from the Jiaxing prefect by posing as a messenger from the Henan courier service delivering word of the prefect's promotion. Alas, it was not to be. As the prefect well knew, officials were informed of their promotions and transfers through Board notifications from the capital. It was very strange, therefore, that a magistrate in Zhejiang should be notified of his promotion by an errand runner from a distant province's courier service.[112]

Procedure rather than documents also defeated Gao Fake, the soldier from Guizhou who posed as a squad leader collecting salary payments for wounded soldiers passing through Yunnan in 1770. There did not seem to be anything wrong with the bogus ration tickets Gao presented at two military stations on successive evenings. What aroused suspicion was the fact that he came alone, for standing policy was to "see the troops and [only then] pay out" (*jian bing zhifang*). At the first station Gao explained that his men were "thanking the gods" in a nearby temple. The next night they were "resting" in another temple. Both stations paid out the rice and silver for his nonexistent troops, but they also followed up by checking on them, and there was not a single soldier to be found at either location. "Squad leader" Gao was soon spotted at a marketplace, however, selling the rice intended for his phantom troops.[113]

The errors and shortcomings that led to these moments of detection and exposure point to the limits of the counterfeiter's craft. The forger had to clear several barriers: execution of the document and its seal and insertion into the administrative machinery. In this process, the state policed several boundaries: the documents themselves, the seals upon them, the communications system through which they flowed, and the men who handled them. Archival evidence—the paucity of

higher-level forgeries (memorials, for example) and direct insertions into the courier network, and the frequent discovery of problems with the seals—suggests that official barriers were fairly well patrolled and effective, especially with regard to the detection of bogus seals. Inasmuch as the seal was the all-important instrument of verification and authentication, the eyes of Qing clerks and magistrates probably took them in at least as closely as the texts themselves. Like practiced modern bank tellers who, even before the days of electronic scanning, could detect a counterfeit bill with a glance or by the touch, experienced yamen eyes, when open, could catch the flaws in a forged seal.

This is not to say that all forgeries were spotted the moment they met official eyes. At least three of Kong Chuanyi's bogus notifications and responses passed undetected. The phony jailor Zhu Sheng's credentials got by a county magistrate and a prefect before being spotted in the provincial capital. The sick troops who bought Wu Fengyi's counterfeit return orders successfully made it to their home camps in neighboring provinces, the forgeries only coming to light after officials back in Sichuan learned that forty soldiers had not shown up to collect their rations. In 1771, in Anxiang county, Hunan, a dismissed yamen clerk was arrested for stealing a landowner's tax payment, which he had pretended to remit on his behalf, stamping a phony seal on the official stub attached to the land deed. Subsequent interrogations revealed he had been committing the same crime for four years.[114] And of course, we simply cannot know how many forgeries were never discovered.

No report on a forgery case was complete without mention of what had become of the seals and printing blocks. Either officials had seized them in their search of a suspect's residence or baggage and destroyed them at the end of the investigation, or the forger confessed that he had destroyed them himself to avoid discovery. From the official perspective these objects simply had to be accounted for; a seal on the loose was a menace to the political order. By declaring not only that the offenders had been caught but also that the offending objects had been destroyed, officials could bring a comforting sense of closure to a case.

But there would always be more cases. Even more than yamen underlings, seals were integral to Qing administration. Essential to most government operations, high and low, the seal verified the official nature and contents of a document. Indeed, one common term for official seals combined the characters *yin* (seal, or to stamp) and *xin* (to believe, credit, proof, truth); thus *yinxin*: "stamping credential" or "to prove by stamping a seal."[115] Less numerous and better controlled than yamen runners, seals also carried greater political

weight. A seal was more versatile and awe-inspiring than a runner, as it simultaneously authenticated the document, its bearer, and the mission itself and clearly indicated that all three represented a higher political authority. Thanks to these uncommon qualities, seals and the documents they authenticated were perennial sources of temptation and objects of counterfeiting. Ironically but not coincidentally, the functions of a bogus seal were almost exactly the same as those of a legitimate one. Instead of proving the authenticity of a legitimate document, however, it disguised the falsity of a counterfeit. As many a forger confessed, the point of counterfeiting was to gain trust, or "obtain belief" (*qu xin*); that is, to make people believe a bogus document was authentic and the mission legitimate. The allure and the fabrications would persist for as long as there were originals to copy.

CHAPTER 6

Bad Proxies and Bogus Credentials: Forgery and the Purchase of Official Rank

I went to the capital to. . . . acquire a tribute student title by contribution, and also purchased one for my maternal uncle. . . . On account of this, friends and neighbors came to know that I was familiar with the contributions.

—Zhong Jieyuan,
forger of seals and contribution licenses

THE QING STATE SUPPLEMENTED ITS REGULAR REVENUE sources with the sale of official titles and ranks, ranging from studentships and various honorary titles to actual official posts. Through such "contributions," acting officials could secure early promotions, dismissed ones return to the bureaucratic ranks, languishing expectants move up on the waiting lists, unsuccessful examination candidates gain honorary titles, and commoners attain official student status, the springboard to all the rest.

Officials at the time and scholars ever since have condemned the contribution system's pernicious effects on the quality and integrity of government administration, particularly in the nineteenth century.[1] Only very recently have historians begun to move beyond what might be called the "rot and decline" framework to explore the contributions as a key fiscal mechanism facilitating the Qing state's long-term stability and nineteenth-century survival, an opportunity and meeting ground for diverse economic interests, and a common tool for status maintenance and career advancement even among examination elites.[2] Within this context, the system also became a site of criminal activities in society at large, centered on the counterfeiting of *jiansheng* licenses in the regular contributions and of ceremonial licenses associated with the cult of Confucius and other orthodox sages. Case records illuminate the social and institutional spaces in which swindlers could operate, showing that the crimes involved three parties—perpetrators, victims, and the state—and three corresponding areas of interest and concern: money, status, and politics.

TITLES AND RANKS FOR SALE: THE QING CONTRIBUTION SYSTEM

The sale of ranks and offices was a time-honored, if infamous, expedient for augmenting revenue in times of need. According to the standard work on the subject, sales of noble titles and official posts were already taking place in the Qin (221–206 BCE) and Han periods, but the widespread, systematic sale of official posts and studentships (*juanzhi* and *najian*, hence the abbreviation *juanna* to denote the entire system) began in the early Ming. The practice expanded to unprecedented levels in the southern Ming following the Manchu

invasion of 1644, and as early as 1649 the Manchus themselves sold *gongsheng* (tribute student) and *jiansheng* licenses.[3]

Ultimately, the contributions proved to be an irresistible revenue source and an integral part of Qing finance and society. A complicated system was already emerging by the late Kangxi period, and by 1745 it formally comprised two types of sale: temporary (*zhanxing shili*) and regular or ongoing (*xianxing changli*). Sales of actual official posts were temporary, announced when major government projects such as military campaigns, river works, famine relief, or land reclamation and settlement programs created financial shortfalls.[4] With the regular contributions, which continued almost uninterrupted into the last years of the Qing period, an official could enhance or restore his status and commoners could purchase *gongsheng* and *jiansheng* studentships or brevet ranks (*xuxian*).[5]

The most common contribution was for the nominal *jiansheng* title. There were nearly 316,000 such purchases across China (Zhili excepted) in the Daoguang period and more in the preceding Jiaqing era, garnering no less than 34 million and 40 million ounces of silver, respectively.[6] From 1745 onward a commoner could generally acquire the title for 108 ounces of silver in the capital and 100 ounces in the provinces.[7]

From the 1720s to about 1850, the basic statutory procedures in Beijing were as follows: First, the applicant submitted his petition in person at the Board of Revenue, together with a guarantee stamped with the seal of a metropolitan official of the sixth rank who hailed from the contributor's home province. The Board sent a notification to the applicant's native place, instructing officials there to create and submit a "clean background register" (*shenjia qingbai ce*). Once the applicant had been thus cleared, the Board's Contributions Office (*juannafang*) gave him an authorizing certificate (*zhafu*), and he made his contribution at the Board treasury. Next, the treasury notified the Contributions Office and the Board of Civil Appointments. The latter issued a license (*zhizhao*), which the contributor obtained at the Contributions Office. As it was a studentship he was acquiring, each new *jiansheng* received two licenses, one from the Board of Revenue and one from the Directorate of Education (Guozi Jian). Finally, The Board sent monthly notifications to each province listing the number and names of new contributors from that province. Provincial authorities then directed the departments and counties with new licensees to post public notices announcing the honors.[8]

There were comparable procedures for making contributions in the provinces, but there the provincial administration commission would issue two treasury receipts (*shishou*), one for the applicant and one for the Board of Revenue in the capital. The applicant presented his

treasury receipt to obtain his *jiansheng* license.[9]

The formal *juanna* system was not the only avenue for gaining a title by contribution, provided one would be satisfied with a ceremonial title that did not lead to a substantive office. During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the most common alternative was probably the "master of ceremony" (*lisheng*) license. *Lisheng*, or *zanlisheng*, were the ceremonial masters and assistants who sang out procedural cues and guided the presiding officials during major sacrifices at schools, temples, and shrines throughout the empire, including various establishments associated with the descendants of Confucius and his followers.[10] The state set quotas for these and similar positions but otherwise generally allowed the presiding establishments to fill them from within their own ranks or, if vacancies remained, with upstanding members of the local populace.[11] The latter provision gave rise to a "contribution" process mirroring that for *jiansheng* purchases but emanating from semiprivate institutions and with little or no oversight from the Board of Revenue.[12]

SCAMMING THE SYSTEM

As the contributions system collected huge amounts of silver, it comes as no surprise that it was subject to various forms of abuse. In the realm of corruption, the Gansu grain contribution program of 1774–81 turned into a massive fraud orchestrated by the provincial administration commissioner and scores of colluding local magistrates, who together pocketed the better part of 10 million ounces of silver earmarked for famine relief.[13] There was also malfeasance in lower echelons of the metropolitan bureaucracy: in 1830, clerks in the Contributions Office itself were found to be the center of a phony license scam going back fifteen years. During that time they had used forged seals to issue more than four thousand fake licenses, pocketing the funds contributed by the unsuspecting would-be licensees.[14] In the area of nominal ritual titles, early in the Yongzheng period the superintendent of the Translators Institute[15] described his efforts to stamp out an illicit practice that had become common there over the years: exceeding the quota of apprentice translators (*yizi sheng*) with purely nominal appointments, giving the shadow appointees licenses and notifying their home jurisdictions of their promotions in status. Many such appointees used the licenses as "protective amulets" (*hufu*) in their home towns. The report also noted that imperial edicts had already abolished similar titles at other government agencies, including astronomy apprentice (*tianwen sheng*), "Confucian gentleman" (*Rushi*), musician (*yuesheng*), and dance performer (*wusheng*).[16]

There was also the problem of engrossment, in which officials or

other influential persons monopolized the processing of contribution funds. Xu Daling cited the example of one Huang Chunyou, who ensconced himself as proxy and monopolized the horse contributions (*juanma shili*) launched during the expeditions against the Zunghar khan Galdan in 1696–97. Huang's methods included conniving with Board officials to falsify accounts, charging exorbitant rates, and the precedent-setting use of commercial establishments to collect contributors' funds. He managed to extract some 200,000 ounces of silver in profit.[17] Even without a full monopoly, proxy remittance occasionally led to the swallowing of large numbers of contributions altogether. Wu Yue has noted two such cases from the Qianlong era. In 1754 a group of criminals opened a phony banking house (*yinhao*) in Beijing and, under the pretext of serving as proxy contribution agents, bilked would-be contributors of 15,000 ounces of silver. Twenty years later, again in Beijing, it was reported that the operators of another "bandit bank" (*jianfei yinhao*) had absconded with the funds entrusted to them by some 8,000 contributors.[18]

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The archives reveal more than corruption and "bandit banks," however. Contributions were also subject to criminal manipulation by more marginal people, outsiders with little capital and no backing from political heavyweights. At this level there were three basic types of crime. One was acquiring *jiansheng* status by contribution under false pretenses (*maojuan*); that is, purchasing a title when one's social or professional background rendered one ineligible. This was an illicit route to status and a place at the examinations for "mean people" — certain yamen underlings, beggars, slaves, entertainers, and the like, or their descendants.[19] The central government archives contain numerous such cases, most involving yamen underlings or their progeny who changed their names, falsified their family backgrounds, and then made a contribution to attain *jiansheng* status or even an official post.

Pretending to Be a Jiansheng

Lowly status notwithstanding, yamen underlings were part of the government apparatus. Outside of it altogether, in the general populace, were small-time actors who figured largely in two other types of crime. One was to seek a government post by falsely claiming one had already purchased the requisite *jiansheng* or ninth-rank status. A case from the Yongzheng period shows motivations, methods, and the state's ability to prevent such transgressions.[20] In the merit evaluations following the Tibetan campaign of 1720, the Board of Civil Appointments rewarded a forty-eight-year-old *jiansheng* named Wang Wenjun with the rank of county vice-magistrate (*xiancheng*).[21] It assigned Wang to Hongdong County, Shanxi, in the summer of 1724,

and sent routine instructions for his home county of Xindu, Sichuan, to provide a written guarantee of his eligibility. Curiously, the Xindu magistrate had no record of Wang having acquired a *jiansheng* degree, and Wang was unable to produce his license. He explained that he had purchased the title in Xiangshan County, Zhejiang, in 1689, but lost his license in a fire at a City God temple in Shaanxi thirty-five years later.

Suspicious Sichuan officials requested confirmation of Wang's status from Zhejiang, but the acting governor there reported that in 1689 the sale of ranks had not yet begun in that province. Moreover, no one named Wang Wenjun had purchased a *jiansheng* title in Xiangshan at any time since sales commenced in 1690. This convinced the Sichuan authorities that Wang was a fraud trying to finagle an official post. Wang refused to confess, however, and he was immune from judicial torture by virtue of his *jiansheng* status. With the court's approval, he was stripped of his rank to facilitate interrogation and sentencing.

Bad Proxies

Between the state above and contributors below there emerged in the Qing period a third institution, the proxy remittance mechanism, whereby a contributor would pay a middleman to make the trip to the dynastic capital or provincial seat and process a contribution on his behalf.

The archives suggest that the most common *juanna* offense (apart, perhaps, from inside jobs perpetrated by yamen clerks) involved small-time middlemen who promised to complete contributions by proxy (*baolan juanna*, or simply *daijuan*) but instead kept the silver for themselves. The key to this sort of crime was forging the necessary documents. An example from the late Qianlong period opens windows on the economic and social milieux of proxy purchase and on pressures and temptations leading to the production of bogus credentials.

In June of 1782, yamen runners in Pingyi County, Yunnan, spotted a suspicious-looking stranger in a restaurant outside the town's east gate.[22] A search of his baggage turned up Gansu provincial treasury receipts made out to four local *jiansheng* contributors (three men from Pingyi and one from neighboring Guangxi Department) and corresponding notifications for their magistrates. All of these documents proved to be forgeries, and a few weeks later the acting governor submitted a memorial on one Luo Dasheng, "a scoundrel who carved seals and forged Gansu province *jiansheng* treasury receipts." The sentence was decapitation without delay (*zhan lijue*).[23]

According to Luo's confession and other information gathered in the course of the investigation, the events leading to this grim result

unfolded as follows: Luo Dasheng was a Sichuanese who had come to Yunnan with his father and worked in a copper mine in Xuanwei Department, north of Pingyi. Subsequently he went to Gansu with his elder brother to make proxy *jiansheng* purchases for people in the Xuanwei-Pingyi area, acquiring one for himself as well. In 1780, he returned to Pingyi in search of more business, and soon had four customers. Unfortunately, after going back to Sichuan to make the preparations he was delayed for several months and then learned that the Gansu contributions had been discontinued.[24] Casting about for an alternative source of income, he hit on an idea: He knew how to carve seals and, previously, when acting as proxy contributor, had made sample copies of *jiansheng* credentials. Why not fabricate more and pass them off, for much greater profit, as the real thing? Luo got to work immediately, printing up bogus documents for the aspiring contributors. Returning to Yunnan, he was just preparing to defraud them when he was stopped and caught out by the magistrate's patrol.

Proxy frauds also appeared in the ritual license business. In 1751, for example, a commoner was arrested in the capital with a counterfeit Hanlin erudite's official seal and forged licenses for *lisheng* at temple sacrifices.[25] The prestigious Hanlin Academy dated to the Tang era.[26] Its staff, which averaged 126 over the early and middle Qing period, chiefly comprised readers, expositors, compilers, correctors, and probationers, but at times also included "Erudites of the Five Classics" (Wujing Boshi), a title bestowed on descendants of twenty-two historical exemplars.[27] The forger, whose name was Zhang Shu, confessed that he had fabricated thirty sets of notifications and licenses stamped with the seal of Erudite Zhong, descendant of Confucius's student Zhong You (542–480 BCE), and sold fourteen of them for an ounce or two of silver each.[28]

STATUS HUNGER AND THE MARKET FOR PROXIES

These and other cases show crimes unfolding in three overlapping arenas of status acquisition, market networks, and political authority. The "burned license" case spoke directly to the first of these. Wang Wenjun contributed to the dynastic cause at a time of emergency and, had he truly purchased *jiansheng* status as a young man, would have been eligible for an official post in the special circumstances following the Tibetan campaign. Unfortunately, he had not laid the necessary groundwork, and when opportunity arose found himself one rung too low on the ladder of success. He tried to solve the problem by pretending to have already attained official status. This put him on a collision course with the state, which had bureaucratic safeguards in place to prevent just this sort of status transgression. Wang's story about a temple fire plausibly explained his inability to present a license for inspection, but it could not explain the absence of

contribution records in Sichuan and Zhejiang.

Status hunger was also the sine qua non of false proxy scams (and true proxies as well), as it was desire for the *jiansheng* title that turned would-be contributors into customers and victims. Most scholarship on the contributions system has focused on its relationship to office-seeking. *Jiansheng* were of course entitled to sit for the provincial exams and to make further contributions in the hope of obtaining official titles and even actual posts. Criminal cases remind us, however, of the advantages that contributions could bring in other contexts, among people who were probably not seeking official careers. *Jiansheng* status was coveted not only as a first step toward officeholding but also because it conferred immediate, tangible benefits in everyday life. The *jiansheng* were, as Ping-ti Ho put it, "a privileged group"; its members were entitled to wear the scholar's cap and gown and be addressed as "Sir." They were exempted from labor service obligations (and the tax payments to which they were converted after 1727), from the annual exams that *shengyuan* had to take to maintain their status, and from judicial torture, physical punishment, and other humiliations associated with litigation at the yamen.[29] Thus, the title conferred both practical and symbolic advantages at home, at the yamen, and in the local community at large.

This aspect of the system becomes even clearer when we consider the sale of prestige titles associated with the cults of Confucius and other sages. The men who paid Zhang Shu an ounce or two of silver for *lisheng* licenses were buying privileges, not actual posts. The same was true of seven Yangzhou residents who made down payments for clerk (*guangou*) titles at the Establishment of the Duke for Fulfilling the Sage in 1731. Two of the purchasers later deposed that they wanted to buy clerkships "because we were unsuccessful in our studies and unable to make *jiansheng* contributions." Two others, merchants from Huizhou, explained that they "wanted an honorable appearance" or face (*yao ge xu timian*).[30]

Similarly, the *lisheng* license did not set one on the ladder of success in the same way that *jiansheng* status could. Most fundamentally, it did not enable the bearer to take the provincial exams and become eligible for official titles and posts. Nor were its purchasers likely to actually serve at temple sacrifices. Rather, they were paying to get their names on the gentry registers, avoid labor obligations, and be entitled to wear an official's hat knob. These privileges were clearly indicated in the texts of the erudite's *lisheng* licenses and notifications that Zhang Shu sold in 1750, and he observed in his confession that the buying of such licenses to serve as "protective amulets" was common practice in the provinces.[31] Thirty

years later in southern Zhili, a swinder named Li Lianke also emphasized the labor exemption while selling bogus licenses for apprentice sacrificer (*sisheng*) positions at the Duke of Zhou Temple (Zhou Gong Miao) in Shandong. Twenty-one victims took the bait.[32]

Privileges aside, the *lisheng* title itself carried some prestige. In a recent study of the role of masters of ceremony in dynastic ritual, and particularly in the Confucian sacrifices held twice yearly in counties and departments throughout the realm, Liu Yonghua has noted that local *shengyuan* often assumed the *lisheng* role, which he argues was a significant one in the ceremonies. Officials may have communicated with the spirits, but it was the *lisheng* who facilitated this communication, issuing the prompts and guiding the ceremony to its conclusion. Thus, although most gentrymen probably considered the role beneath them, for *shengyuan*, merchants, and other commoners it could be prestigious.[33]

Thus, just as hundreds of thousands purchased *jiansheng* licenses without actually moving to Beijing and attending the college, so did hundreds purchase *lisheng* licenses without going to Qufu or the "southern Kong" establishment in Xi'an County, Zhejiang, to assist in the sacrifices. The titles themselves enhanced the purchasers' status. Since they were conferred by establishments associated with the sages, moreover, they may even have raised the recipient above fellow commoners who assisted in various Buddhist and Daoist rituals or in local school ceremonies.[34] A merchant who made such a contribution was symbolically advancing into the ranks of scholars and orthodox ritual specialists.

Markets

Beyond the issue of status acquisition, criminal cases also show us the lower reaches of emerging market networks. At the most basic level, the contribution system involved a transaction between a contributor (paying the silver or grain) and the state (conferring a credential as reward for said contribution). Beijing and the provincial capitals, the sites of these transactions, were inconveniently far from most subjects' homes, and this combined with general ignorance of the bureaucratic procedures to virtually ensure that middlemen would appear as the third leg of the entire system.[35]

Crime narratives show the key elements and characteristics of this market. First was demand, which historical data demonstrate was abundant. Second was the coming together of contributor and middleman or proxy. These "introductions" (*yinjin*) generally took place through close personal networks involving relatives, neighbors, friends, and acquaintances. When Feng Zishi agreed to handle *jiansheng* contributions for fifteen residents of Hengyang, Hunan, in 1733, at least five of them were introduced to him by relatives,

several were related to each other, and six met him through the same man.[36] Luo Dasheng's brother taught him how to find contributors in eastern Yunnan, and Luo was seeking new proxy prospects in familiar territory when he bumped into a friend who asked him to make contributions for three people. Two of them shared the friend's surname, and may well have been relatives. Luo's fourth contributor was also an old friend, who wanted to purchase a *jiansheng* title for his son.[37]

The case of Zhong Jieyuan, a native of Changning County, Jiangxi, is also illustrative. After Zhong went to Beijing and purchased two *gongsheng* titles, one for himself and one for a relative, friends and neighbors came to know that he was familiar with the contribution system. In 1791, a maternal uncle introduced him to a shopkeeper named Ling Zhougui, who wanted to purchase *jiansheng* status. Zhong agreed to serve as proxy and told Ling that nominal official titles (*zhixian*) were also available. When Ling's friends and relatives heard the news, five of them decided to buy *jiansheng* titles, three opted for the lowest official rank (*cong jiupin*), and one set his sights on a department vice-magistrate's (*zhoutong*) title.[38]

The connection could also be quite random. In Zhejiang in 1795, for example, a petty merchant named Zhang Dexian stumbled upon a proxy opportunity when he went to a customer's home to sell brushes and the man mentioned that he wanted to acquire a *jiansheng* title for his son. Zhang said he would make inquiries and, if someone he knew well (*shouren*) were going to the capital, would ask him to handle the contribution.[39] The ducal establishment clerkships case grew out of a chance encounter between two strangers on a boat on the Grand Canal. One was a Confucian academy instructor named Kong Chuanfang, the other a Yangzhou merchant named Zhong Xigong (not to be confused with Zhong Jieyuan, above).[40] Kong subsequently gave Zhong two master of ceremony licenses and told him that nominal ritual and clerical titles could be acquired through contribution.[41]

A third market component was the negotiation of terms. Luo Dasheng's clients agreed to pay 120 ounces of silver each, payable when the notifications and treasury receipts arrived.[42] When the brush seller Zhang Dexian agreed to seek a proxy for his customer, he stated outright that the cost would be 160 ounces of silver, payable upon receipt of the license (*jian zhao fuyin*).[43] Written agreements were common. Feng Zishi's proxy arrangements, for example, featured contracts clearly indicating the amounts to be paid upon arrival of the licenses and signed by both parties in the presence of witnesses.[44] Zhong Jieyuan drew up a single contract for all ten of his contributors during a meeting at Ling Zhougui's shop. The terms were 200 silver dollars for each *jiansheng* purchase, 160 for rank nine, and 810 for the

vice-magistrate's title, for a total of 2,490 silver dollars. The contributors paid 80 percent of the money up front, and the contract stated that Zhong would pay back double if the licenses did not arrive by the fourth month of the following year.[45]

Lastly were the middleman's connections in the dynastic capital or provincial seat (in those cases in which, initially, the proxy honestly intended to make the contributions). Someone had to be familiar with the specific requirements and procedures. Luo Dasheng assumed this role himself (he had done it before), but other proxies used secondary contacts. After Feng Zishi reached his agreement in Hengyang, for example, he traveled to Beijing and negotiated with a fellow Jiangxi native to borrow money and purchase the titles for him.[46] Similarly, Zhong Jieyuan entrusted his purchases to one Tao Runwen, an old friend and *jiansheng* by purchase who ran two paper shops in Jiangxi and had a partner who sold merchandise in Beijing. They agreed on a total price of 1,500 ounces of silver.[47] In cases like this, then, there were at least three sets of transactions: one between the contributor and middleman, one between the middleman and a second proxy, and one between the second proxy and the Board (in Beijing) or surveillance commission (in a provincial seat).

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In his work on the specific mechanisms through which contributions were processed in the nineteenth century, Wu Yue has described how both individual contributors and the government itself came to rely on outside financial institutions such as silver shops, money changers, and remittance banks. Not only did these establishments exchange silver and transfer funds, but some of them also came to serve as one-stop shops furnishing information and handling paperwork for inexperienced out-of-towners and a shorthanded Board bureaucracy.[48] Wu further identifies an emerging proxy contribution "interest group," coalescing around the common interests of merchants in the capital, the Board of Revenue, government clerks, guarantee officials, couriers, and other merchants in the provinces.[49]

In the small-time proxy frauds of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries we can see what preceded and coexisted with these larger networks—and some of the underlying causes for their formation and expansion. Many frauds started out innocently enough, with the proxy intending to complete legitimate transactions. In each case the arrangement was interrupted by some unforeseen development, usually one that created a pressing cash-flow problem. We have seen how the Gansu contribution program was terminated after Luo Dasheng had agreed to handle *jiansheng* purchases for four men in Yunnan. They had given him money for travel expenses, and now he was at a loss as to how to pay them back.[50] Zhong Jieyuan ran

into similar problems. Several months after returning to Jiangxi he received bad news from his friend, Tao Runwen: contributors now had to go to Beijing in person and obtain a guarantee (*yinjie*) stamped with the seal of a capital official who came from the same home province. Zhong's purchasers were from Guangdong, moreover, and Tao's business partner in Beijing did not know any of the Cantonese officials there. Therefore, he could not make the proxy purchases. Now Zhong was in a quandary. In addition, in the intervening months Zhong's mother had passed away, and he had spent 334 of his contributors' dollars on her funeral. Ling Zhougui and the others were demanding their licenses. Zhong kept them at bay for a time with various excuses, but now they vowed to call in the contracted double refund should there be any further delay. It was at this juncture that Zhong turned to forgery to escape from his predicament.[51]

It is difficult to imagine the reputable silver shops, exchange houses, and Shanxi remittance banks that came to specialize in the contributions business being flummoxed by new guaranty requirements or paralyzed by one funeral expenditure, and it was no doubt to avoid such dangers that contributors turned to these emerging institutions. Still, most villages and towns did not have a Shanxi bank, most contributors were unfamiliar with the financial institutions in the capital, and personal connections still counted for much even when those institutions had matured in the nineteenth century. There was still room for small-time proxies.

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The market mechanism is also evident in ceremonial license cases, which exposed to official scrutiny a larger phenomenon, the sage establishments' own blatant sales of various nominal titles. There was a ready market for ceremonial titles, which were cheaper than *jiansheng* purchases but conferred some of the same privileges. The century from the beginning of the Qianlong reign to the beginning of the Daoguang era contained a string of cases in which the Duke, erudites, or their underlings were caught "giving out" (*langei*) clerkships and ceremonial titles in exchange for financial contributions.[52] Tiny in scale as compared to the regular contributions business, this traffic amounted nonetheless to something of a regional niche market in the middle Qing period. And, like the regular contributions, it inspired fraud and counterfeiting. Zhang Shu's *lisheng* license scam was in fact a direct result of it. In filling ceremonial vacancies Hanlin officials were required to ask local authorities to recruit "honest, simple good people" (*yuanpu liangmin*) from among the local populace, but the erudite had given a license out directly and the recipient had subsequently sold it. Zhang witnessed the latter transaction, and it was this effective commodification of the license

that inspired him to sell counterfeits.[53]

POLITICS AND PUNISHMENT

Proxy contribution—whether acting as proxy or hiring one—was illegal for much of the Qing period, mainly because, like proxy tax remittance, it invited all manner of extortions by official underlings and various scoundrels in society at large and could, with official connivance, divert payments into private hands.[54] By 1788 at the latest, the punishment was set at one hundred strokes of the heavy bamboo under the umbrella Article 62.1, "Violating a Written Imperial Order" (Zhishu you wei), and in the late Qing local officials were still required to arrest and punish "unemployed scoundrels" who cheated people by engaging in proxy remittance and charging bogus administrative fees.[55]

The prohibition was ambiguous, however, and the official record betrays some ambivalence in the handling of proxy cases. In 1788, for example, the Qianlong emperor issued a stern edict on the matter but then backtracked. The occasion was the arrest of a false proxy named Wang Nianxiu, who had defrauded six *jiansheng* purchasers in Shaanxi.[56] The case arrested the emperor's attention because he had forbidden proxy contribution at the time of the Gansu corruption fiasco, requiring that contributors apply in person at the Board of Revenue.

> Now that *gong* and *jian* contributions are all made at the Board, how can it be that there are again proxy contributions? . . . If the said students are ambitious to advance, then naturally they should proceed to the Board in person, submit their resumés and await permission to make contributions. This is the only proper way. If students cannot afford the expense of a long journey and cannot go to the Board in person, then they should not make contributions. . . . Henceforward, . . . if one has not gone to the Board himself but hired someone to process a contribution on his behalf, it should be forbidden so as to block the abuses of scoundrels engaging in fraudulent proxy contributions.[57]

The edict was clear and uncompromising, but reality soon intruded. Any contributor from the provinces could have explained why proxy purchases were taking place "again," and the Board of Revenue quickly submitted a carefully worded request that certain kinds of contributors (including the sons of officials, sole heirs, and the old, young, or ill) be allowed to "send someone or ask a close relative" to process the transactions on their behalf. The emperor approved these loopholes just six weeks after issuing his initial edict.[58]

Proxy contributions continued and, imperial protestations notwithstanding, officials did not exhibit any great concern over the

problem. The proxy operations of eighteenth-century silver shops and nineteenth-century banking houses were technically illegal but practically indispensable, and the state turned a blind eye on them.[59] Small-time middlemen hardly merited official attention, and only received it when a more serious crime was involved.

That crime was forgery. What really mattered, and produced the paper trails bequeathed to us in the archives, was the counterfeiting of official documents and seals. This was an extremely serious political transgression, an arrogation of basic official and dynastic authority.[60] False proxies were usually punished under the counterfeiting statutes, because a successful swindle required counterfeit Board documents bearing bogus Board seals. Thus, for sentencing purposes the lesser offense of proxy remittance was subsumed under the more serious crime of counterfeiting.

Audacity and Ignorance

The overriding politics of seal forgery are reflected in crime narratives and sentencing recommendations. In false proxy cases, rhetorical interventions are most evident in the depictions of counterfeiters and contributors, the former appearing as audacious flouters of the law and the latter as ignorant victims.

Inasmuch as they had usurped the dynastic prerogative to confer titles, license counterfeiters were fortunate not to be charged with sedition. In their reports, officials were kind enough to note that the crimes were committed for the sake of money and even out of financial duress, but otherwise the reserves of Confucian compassion tended to run low, with some recommendations emphasizing the counterfeiters' audacity and lawlessness. Li Tingjian "presumptuously dared to carve a fake seal and forge licenses" for Feng Zishi. This made him the principal offender, and he was sentenced to beheading after the assizes while Feng, as accessory, got mere exile to 3,000 *li*. Feng's contact in Beijing "clearly knew about" (*mingzhi*) the forgery scheme and joined the conspiracy by tracing a license and Board seal and providing the special paper on which they were printed. Thus, he was "also a villain in the gang" (*yi shu dang'e*) and, like Feng, deserved exile.[61] In another case, the Three Judicial Offices opined that a medical practitioner who made copies of a deceased relative's *jiansheng* licenses to cheat six contributors in Anhui "truly has no regard for law and discipline" (*shi shu mu wu faji*) and recommended that he be decapitated after the assizes and held ineligible for a recently declared amnesty.[62]

In contrast to these depictions of swindlers, official reports often portrayed contributors in a sympathetic light even though they had violated a prohibition by hiring proxies. In the Feng Zishi case, the victims' depositions are short and mainly tell us that they contracted

with Feng to acquire titles for sons and nephews, and did not pay anything up front.[63] In each case, moreover, the contributor voluntarily presents his contract for official inspection. In short, the report portrays the contributors as fully and transparently cooperative with the investigation.[64] A similar air of openness and legitimacy pervades the contributors' depositions in the Zhong Jieyuan case, which describe wealthy men telling each other about the contribution opportunities and signing the contract at a gathering in one of their shops. The deposition of Zhong's capital contact, Tao Runwen, contains the statement that, "I have two paper stores and am doing pretty well financially. Forging seals and licenses is criminal; how could I be willing to go along with it?"[65] In other words, forgery was criminal and could ruin his comfortable life, but making proxy contributions was innocent and posed no such threat. The inclusion of this frank declaration in the final report suggests that officials may have agreed.[66]

Soft treatment is even more conspicuous in the portrayal of contributors as "ignorant" (*wuzhi*) or "not knowing the circumstances" (*bu zhiqing*). Luo Dasheng's clients "were all engaging [proxy] *jiansheng* contributions and did not know about [Luo's] forging a seal and planning to swindle, and there is no need to deliberate."[67] Wang Nianxiu's six victims "did not know the circumstances and there is no need for deliberation."[68] The forger Li Minyong's contributors fared even better. Li died in jail before he could be sentenced to decapitation, and three unwitting accomplices and go-betweens received heavy sentences as proxy accessories. As for the contributors, the Guangxi governor described them as "ignorant and deceived" (*wuzhi bei pian*) and, far from sentencing them for engaging a proxy, requested that they be allowed to obtain their licenses and become *jiansheng*.[69]

It is noteworthy that the sternest characterizations and sentences came in the decade following the Qianlong emperor's renewed insistence on the proxy prohibition.[70] The context was the recent Gansu scandal, and in those years contributions in general were an especially sensitive topic. Even so, when Zhong Jieyuan's contributors were sentenced to a beating, officials may have been cautiously hinting at clemency when they included the victims' joint statement that, "We truly engaged proxy contributions by mistake and were deceived [*wutuo daijuan bei pian*], and beg for mercy."[71] There is also some evidence that the punitive winds were subsiding again by the early Jiaqing period. Two cases from 1808 and 1838 saw the victims once again spared punishment. In the latter instance, a "brigand" (*feitu*) had swindled forty-three men in Guangdong with false claims that they could acquire honorary official ranks. Provincial authorities

recommended that all but one of the victims be spared punishment, describing them as "bumpkins" who had foolishly listened to misinformed talk.[72]

Ceremonial title cases were handled in much the same way as regular ones, with perpetrators sentenced according to the forgery statutes and victims either sentenced to a beating for engaging proxies or, more commonly, declared ignorant and set free. The acting Jiangsu governor found that the seven would-be clerks in the ducal establishment case of 1731 "were deceived and made contributions by mistake" (*bei pian wujuan*). The governor-general of Zhili invoked the proxy prohibition against Li Lianke's apprentice sacrificer contributors, but the sentences were suspended under an amnesty. When the presiding erudite himself was caught selling real licenses six years later, local and provincial officials refrained from sentencing the purchasers: "Because they were unaware of the prohibition, they took the liberty of making contributions."[73]

Although contributors in false proxy cases were usually unaware that they were receiving bogus documents (in this sense it was true that they "did not know the circumstances"), they could easily have been punished for hiring proxies in the first place, and some were. Most officials chose not to go so far, however, and crafted their reports to depict unscrupulous counterfeiters and ignorant victims. Why they did this is suggested by the underlying politics of forgery and the underlying economics of the contribution system.

The state simply could not tolerate the counterfeiting of treasury receipts and licenses that qualified people for officeholding. Such behavior struck too close to the roots of dynastic authority. As for proxy contribution, it was prohibited mainly because it could slide so easily into monopoly and embezzlement, and also because it compromised Board procedures for verifying an applicant's eligibility to purchase a title. The basic point of the contributions system was to increase revenue, however, and from this perspective it made little sense to turn good business away. Thus, in normal circumstances the illegality of the proxy mechanism was quietly ignored. When more serious crimes delivered proxies and their clients up to official attention, ignoring the law became more difficult. The counterfeiter was obviously in for a heavy sentence; the question was what to do with the others. One common strategy was to punish the middlemen (especially those guilty of forgery) and forgive or absolve the contributors, who, after all, were trying in good faith to put silver in the treasury. Characterizations and sentences in criminal case reports reflected these basic calculations.

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Proxy fraud cases cast light on several aspects of the contribution

system and the Qing social and political order, showing us low-level operations of the proxy contributions market, exposing criminal opportunities and adventures within it, and revealing the varying weights these crimes carried in official eyes. The system meant different things to purchasers, proxies, and the state. Contributors were making investments, either in official careers or for local privilege and respectability. Proxies were in it for the money; to many of them proxy contribution was a source of income, like seal-carving or working in a copper mine. To the central and provincial governments the system was a fiscal device and social safety valve, bringing much-needed revenue to the state and much-desired status and privileges to contributors who otherwise had little hope on the ladder of success.

Almost since its inception, the *juanna* system was the object of strong criticism. High officials warned against the dire consequences of corrupting the route to office. Emperors admitted that the institution was "not a beautiful affair" (*fei meishi*) and declared that the contributions should cease once the crisis of the moment was past.[74] The system obviously had its advocates, however, and they prevailed during two and a half centuries of intermittent (and ultimately perennial) fiscal distress. This was particularly the case for regular contributions involving only the award of *jiansheng* status or nominal official titles. Among their champions were the Yongzheng and Qianlong emperors and some of the most celebrated officials of the high Qing.[75] An edict of 1738 clearly stated the Qianlong emperor's support:

> Since the number of individuals seeking personal advancement through scholarship has been growing daily, this program would open up additional avenues of upward mobility, even as it relieved the provinces of the burden of buying grain on local markets for the purpose of building up emergency reserves.[76]

These words point to the contributions' benefits in two areas, provincial finance and social mobility. The system thrived on the combination of revenue needs above and status hunger below.

This economic and social context facilitated all manner of corruption within the system and a range of crimes on its margins. Common among the latter were proxy purchase scams involving the use of forged credentials to swindle aspiring contributors (and in some cases to deceive government officials as well). Perpetrators operated in the space afforded by gray areas in the system. One was the institution of proxy purchase itself. As with tax payments, the state required that purchases of rank and office be made in person. In practice, however, it was common for people to entrust their payments to intermediaries who would process the transactions on

their behalf. As with regular tax collection, moreover, the government did not possess the resources to manage and police every aspect of the contributions process. Functionally, the intermediary occupied a shadowy space between the payer (the contributor) and the payee (the state), and in this space neither could fully control his actions. The honest proxy arrangement gone bad, premeditated swindles, and even attempts to hoodwink local officials with false documentation were all products of this environment, and byproducts of the contribution system. The state's limited administrative and policing capacities, then, combined to create a space in which proxies and swindlers could operate.

A similar dynamic obtained with the sale of bogus clerkships and ceremonial titles at temples and schools associated with the sages. These deceptions mirrored an established system and its abuses. The Qing state formally recognized the descendants of Confucius and related historical personages, investing them with a ducal and erudites' titles, respectively, and setting quotas for various administrative and ceremonial posts in their establishments. With these quotas came rules governing how vacancies were to be filled, but it is evident that the dukes and at least some erudites fell into the habit of simply selling licenses. Thus arose, at least periodically, a market for honorary titles. Between the worthy and his status-hungry contributors emerged the inevitable middlemen, and not far behind were the frauds.

In effect these forgery cases reveal two parallel systems at work. One was the official apparatus for processing contributions and issuing certificates of academic and official rank. The other was an emerging marketplace of buyers and middlemen, the latter openly contracting to complete proxy transactions for ambitious commoners. The two systems worked in tandem because the late imperial state needed additional revenue but could not reach so far into local society as to establish a direct relationship with all would-be contributors.

This environment presented opportunities to those of entrepreneurial spirit, and there were two kinds of entrepreneurs: true proxies and con men. The con man could lay his plans and simply abscond with the money entrusted him, or use forgery to bridge the gap between expectations and reality. For the true or serious proxy, there was the problem of finance. Once a deal had been struck, the proxy generally received only a down payment or travel expenses and had to front the remainder. Most proxies probably had the means to manage this and the wisdom to only enter into agreements they knew they could fulfill. Some were neither wealthy nor wise, however, and this sort tended to experience cash flow problems. One solution was to acknowledge defeat and cancel the contract, another to abscond with

the money. A few bold and foolhardy souls sought instead a middle ground via forgery, pretending that everything had gone smoothly, using bogus documents to satisfy the customer and even the state, and hoping thereby to keep the silver despite their inability to do the job.

The state policed the system to ensure the proper flow of revenue and prevent status transgressions. In this larger context, proxy remittance was mainly a cause for concern when tied to official corruption or, in the case of private banking institutions, when large sums of silver disappeared. Officials were little concerned with small-time proxies—unless they fabricated official documents. This immediately raised even minor frauds to a high political level. The forgery statutes were not a quaint relic of the Tang and Ming codes. Far from it, they were the central focus and guide for investigation and punishment. Still, most contributors had nothing to do with forgery and something to do with ameliorating fiscal crisis, and in handling these cases officials confronted basic politics but also basic economics. Both concerns shaped the crime narratives and official characterizations of the parties involved. Contributors who had hired a proxy became ignorant victims and were even allowed to make good on their contributions. Middlemen who had not taken a hand in forgery were described perfunctorily and received sentences of one hundred (actually forty) blows. Document counterfeiters, alas, were lawless and frequently received death sentences. The crimes may have been perpetrated for money, but forging an official seal was a fateful political transgression.

CHAPTER 7

From Politics to Money: Legal Reckoning in the High Qing

> If distinctions are not made between the different level . . . then when [the penalty] should be light but is relatively heavy, what of the people's lives? And when it should be heavy but is relatively light, what of the king's regulations?
>
> —Edict of the Qianlong Emperor, 1759

FROM THE SAFE DISTANCE OF TWO OR THREE HUNDRED YEARS, forgery and impersonation make for entertaining reading. Qing monarchs and officials betrayed few signs of amusement, however, and the fraud who got caught paid a high price for his deeds. In traditional Chinese law, the crimes examined in this book fell under the category Zhawei, a compound formed from the characters for *zha* ("deception" or "to deceive") and *wei* ("false" or "to counterfeit"). Eight of the eleven Zhawei articles in the Qing code, and twelve of the thirty-five statutes they contained, prescribed a death sentence for the most serious offenses.[1] One crime, "counterfeiting the imperial seals," was listed under the Ten Abominations (Shi E), heinous crimes against the political and moral order.[2]

The Zhawei sections of the dynastic legal codes have received very little scholarly attention, but close examination is rewarding in that it shows changing conceptions of crime and punishment over time. Tracing the evolution of Zhawei laws from the early imperial period to the Ming and early Qing reveals an increasing emphasis on political transgression, whereas statutory changes of the eighteenth century show growing tensions between political and economic views of crime. Case records and statutory trends indicate that the eighteenth-century change was driven in part by the Qing state's frequent encounters with petty frauds.

"DECEPTION AND COUNTERFEITING" FROM EARLY IMPERIAL TO EARLY QING LAW

Pre-Tang legal codes survive only in fragments, but dynastic histories show that as a legal category the term *zhawei* dates to the Han period at least. During the period of division (220–589), the Wei (220–265) code's "Deception" statutes (Zhalü) gathered Han statutes and ordinances on lying and deceiving, Zhawei, "exceeding boundaries," forging imperial edicts, falsifying life or death, and deceptively obtaining relief from statute labor.[3] Similarly, the Jin (265–419) code of 268 divided the Han Theft statutes (Daolü) into four sections, one being Zhawei.[4] There were Zhawei sections in the Liang (502–56),

Northern Qi (550–77), and Northern Zhou (557–81) codes, and probably in the Southern Qi (479–502) code (upon which the Liang code was said to have been based).[5] The Sui (581–618) codes of 583 and circa 607 both contained Zhawei sections, as did the Tang code of 653.[6] In short, from no later than the third century onward, Chinese legal codes contained a Zha or Zhawei section.

We know little about the specific contents of any of the early laws, but the opening subcommentary to the Tang Zhawei statutes suggests continuity from the Wei to the Tang: "The Wei dynasty made the Articles on Fraud and Counterfeit by separating them from the [Han] laws on robbery. Successive generations have passed, yet these laws have lasted until the present time without change."[7] There is also a smattering of early references to other crimes that would later appear in the Tang Zhawei statutes. These include Qin laws on document forgery and coin counterfeiting and Former Han (202 BCE–9 CE) statutes on "the surreptitious casting of cash" and counterfeiting gold.[8] It is not clear how these offenses and statutes were classified in Qin and Han law, but all would fall under the Zhawei heading in the Tang code, the earliest that survives in toto.[9]

Zhawei From Tang To Yuan

In a detailed summary and brief analysis of the Tang Zhawei statutes, Dai Yanhui defined *zhawei* as "false or deceptive behavior in connection with the existence or form of a thing or fact."[10] The looseness of this definition speaks to the breadth of the twenty-seven Tang statutes, which covered a range of misrepresentations relating to both state and society. These included seal forgery; the altering, counterfeiting, or misuse of official documents; false reports; assuming office through fraudulent means; false claims of inheritance; impersonating an official; obtaining property fraudulently; claiming a commoner to be a slave or a slave to be free; making false portents; "deceptively enticing someone to commit a crime"; fraudulent use of the official courier system; fraudulently avoiding tax or labor obligations; fraudulent medical treatment; hiding the fact of a parent's death; causing bodily injury through deception; "guarantees of responsibility that fail"; and false testimony.[11]

Dai began his analysis of the statutes by following the traditional practice of dividing them into two groups, *wei* (five articles) and *zha* (twenty-two articles).[12] He defined *wei* as the fabrication of a physical object of set shape and content and, drawing on the abovementioned definitions offered by the Wei code and the commentary on Article 368 of the Tang code itself, defined *zha* as "treachery and cunning . . . or knowing a matter to be false but concealing it."[13] With regard to counterfeiting, Dai observed, the seals, tallies, and ensigns involved were all official or dynastic "pledges" or "objects of

verification" (*xinwu*). The commentary to Article 362 specifically noted the etymological connection: "*Yin* also means *xin*" (*xin* as in "believe" or "proof"). Thus, as Dai concluded, "the legal interest that the counterfeit penalties protected was the state's credibility."[14] This is most evident in the fact that the statutes only concerned the seals, tallies, ensigns, and documents of the emperor, empresses, the heir apparent and his consorts, and government officials. There were no statutes on forging the seal of a private individual, and such activity would only incur punishment when perpetrated in order to avoid some official responsibility.[15]

The twenty-two *zha* articles, on the other hand, did not share such a singular focus. As Dai observed, "There was no one legal interest that [the code] protected; there were the state's credibility, property, and fairness in public matters—especially adjudication; and there were also personal property and health and so on."[16] In fact, the only common element linking all of the *zha* articles was the method used, deception. Thus, although there was emphasis on the state and its reputation and command of resources, other deceptions also had a place in the Tang Zhawei statutes.

Neither the Song (960–1279) nor the Yuan (1279–1368) codes are extant, but much of their content is known from other sources. The Song Zhawei section closely followed the (Sui-) Tang model.[17] The (Jurchen) Jin (1127–1234) code also contained a Zhawei section, but that code is lost.[18] Judging by extant remnants, the contents of the Yuan code were similar to those of the Tang and Song but may have contained some new categories. The Zhawei section of the legal treatise in the Yuan dynastic history contained thirty-eight items. Many were clearly derived from the Tang code, but apparently new ones specified punishments for such offenses as forging certain contracts or deeds (*qiben*) and commercial tax documents, calendars, paper currency, and silver. One article concerned government clerks who forged provincial seals to sell official posts.[19]

In addition, the *Yuan Institutions and Regulations* recorded eighteen case precedents from the period 1271 to 1322. If they are representative, then new Zhawei legislation (and perhaps new *zhawei* crimes) in the first half of the Mongol period focused on acts of extortion using false claims to be on an official errand (with phony imperial, princely, provincial, or circuit-level credentials) and forgery of county and provincial seals, requisitions, tea and salt licenses, and tax receipts. In addition, two precedents of 1286 and 1296 addressed phony divine possession and forgery of Buddhist sutras, respectively.[20] These diverse remnants suggest that in Yuan law the Zhawei category expanded somewhat to incorporate currency and calendar forgery and certain economic crimes involving the use of official seals or

documents (or both), and that the state found it necessary to legislate against both officials and commoners who committed extortion by falsely claiming to be on official errands. Many of these crimes would figure prominently in the Ming and Qing codes.

The Ming Concentration

The Ming code of 1397 marked the first major revision and restructuring of codified law since the Tang code of 653 (or perhaps even the Sui code of 581–83, the structure of which the Tang code was said to have closely followed).[21] In the Ming reorganization, the Zhawei chapter shrank from twenty-seven articles to twelve; ultimately, beginning in the early Qing, there would be eleven.[22] Closely following the Ming code in form and basic content, the mature Qing code comprised 436 articles in seven major divisions, six of them named for the Six Boards of central government administration; thus, laws relating to Civil Appointments, Revenue, Rites, War, Punishments, and Works.[23] Zhawei was one of eleven sections in the "Punishments" division.[24] Table 2 presents William C. Jones's translation of the Qing article headings.[25]

TABLE 2. Zhawei Statutes in the Qing Code

Following Jones, trans., *The Great Qing Code*, xxvi–xxvii.

355.	Counterfeiting an Imperial written order
356.	Falsely transmitting an [oral] expression of the Imperial will
357.	Applying or addressing a petition to the Emperor in a way that is not in accordance with the facts
358.	Counterfeiting seals, almanacs, and the like
359.	Privately casting copper cash
360.	Falsely impersonating an official
361.	Falsely claiming to be one in close attendance on the emperor, an imperial secretary, or other official
362.	Court attendants who falsely claim to be charged with a private mission
363.	Fraudulently inventing a good omen
364.	Feigning sickness, death, or injury to avoid tasks
365.	Craftily enticing another to commit an offence

The removal of sixteen Tang statutes reflected a change in the juridical conception of *zhawei*, in which the emphasis on the counterfeiting of official documents and fraudulent assumption of official status became even more pronounced. Gone were the references to inheritance, "obtaining government or private goods or articles," falsely declaring commoner or slave status, killing or wounding through deception, medical fraud, false testimony, and failed guarantees of responsibility. Gone, in short, were nearly all of the deceptions that did not involve misappropriation or misuse of official authority.[26] Of the remaining statutes, three addressed false

pretense to official status, five falsifying tools or symbols of state authority, and at least three deceiving officials or the throne. Even Article 365 ("Craftily enticing another to commit an offence") fell into this category. It emphasized luring a previously innocent person into crime and then seizing him or reporting him, deceiving the authorities and bringing the wrath of the state down on the victim's head.[27] Thus, in the construction of the Ming code and its perpetuation in the Qing, the Zhawei category became even more state-focused.

QING BASICS: STATUTES, PRINCIPLES, AND CONCERNS

Each of the eleven Zhawei article headings in the Qing code represented the most serious of a range of crimes, with between one and four statutes specifying those offenses, lesser variations, and the punishments each incurred. Each statute, moreover, covered a range of finely distinguished offenses listed in descending order from the most serious crimes and heaviest penalties to lesser offenses and their lighter punishments.

Forgery of official documents fell under Articles 355, "Counterfeiting an Imperial written order," and 358, "Counterfeiting seals, almanacs, and the like." The former contained four statutes, one covering that crime, two more on the counterfeit of orders from various government offices from the Six Boards down to the local county, and a fourth prescribing the same punishments (with the exception of death) for an official who condoned any of the first three. The punishment for counterfeiting an imperial edict was decapitation after the assizes, reduced to strangulation if the forgery was attempted but not completed, and further reduced to a hundred strokes of the heavy bamboo if the counterfeit was in fact only an unintentional copy error. Punishments under the second and third statutes (on lesser counterfeits) similarly ranged from strangulation after the assizes to penal servitude, with further reductions for accessories and those who counterfeited a document but had not put it to use.[28]

Article 358 prescribed a sentence of beheading with delay for counterfeiting a high-level yamen seal (*yinxin*), almanac, boat or horse delivery order, or tea or salt transport license; and three years of penal servitude for counterfeiting lesser official seals (*guanfang* and *yinji*). Accessories would receive a sentence reduced by one degree, as would those whose counterfeits were incomplete. Officials who knew of the crime but did nothing would receive the same punishment as the principal offender.[29]

Impersonation fell under Articles 360, "Falsely impersonating an official," and 361, "Falsely claiming to be one in close attendance on the emperor, an imperial secretary, or other official." The former prescribed beheading with delay for forging an identification certificate and falsely claiming to be an official (or enabling someone

else to do so) and exile to 3,000 *li* for obtaining such a document from someone else and using it to impersonate an official. If a poser did not use a fake identification document but claimed to be an official, pretended to have been sent to make an arrest, or assumed the name of a presently serving official, all "in order to obtain something" (*you suo qiuwei*), the sentence was three years of penal servitude. For impersonating a member of an official's household in order to pursue illegal gain in his jurisdiction, the penalty was a hundred strokes of the heavy bamboo.[30]

Article 361 singled out for heavier punishments two kinds of imposture that did not feature forged identification documents but were considered particularly egregious. One statute prescribed beheading with delay for those who pretended to be on investigative missions and "deceived government offices and aroused the people." Another awarded a hundred strokes of the heavy bamboo and exile to a distance of 3,000 *li* for claiming to be a special envoy and demanding mounts and supplies on the official courier routes.[31] The Qing code also carried over two substatutes from the Ming. One added punishments for pretending to be a relative or servant of a palace official and committing extortion at government offices.[32] The other addressed impersonating an imperial guardsman and, on the pretext of conducting investigations or pursuing thieves, abusing officials and local populations in the provinces.[33]

Altogether, then, the law was quite harsh on these types of offenses, and especially on seal forgery, which had baseline penalties of death or penal servitude (reducible depending on the circumstances) and which itself was an aggravating factor in cases of impersonation.

Political Bedrock

The framers of the Ming code, and of its nearly identical Qing descendant, did not declare the focus of their streamlined Zhawei section outright. Private Ming and Qing commentaries did explain the reasoning behind individual articles, however, in clear statements that would be incorporated into most editions of the Qing code from the beginning of the eighteenth century onward.[34] These commentaries show the political bedrock of late imperial Zhawei law and help to explain why forgery and impersonation incurred such harsh punishments.

A late Ming commentary described forging or doctoring an imperial written order (Article 355 in the Qing code) as "an ordinary man arrogating the Son of Heaven's authority" (*yi pifu er shan tianzi zhi quan*).[35] The influential early Qing commentary of Shen Zhiqi (fl. 1715) expressed the same sentiment more loftily: "When Zhawei reaches [the level of] an imperial written order, then it infringes on

the authority of the Son of Heaven."[36] On the related crime of falsely transmitting an oral expression of the Imperial will (Article 356 in the Qing code), the same Ming commentary went beyond infringement to address more concrete repercussions, noting that royal decrees "should all be reverently obeyed by officials and people. If they are falsely transmitted, then it could harm the people and bring disorder to government."[37] Or, as Shen Zhiqi's commentary put it, "If there is false transmission, then there must be selfish action and undermining of government."[38] The same principle applied to seal forgery (Article 358). Commentaries emphasized the fact that official seals were basic tokens of the state's authority and credibility, "things in which all under Heaven place great trust" or "bestowed by the Court and accepted as authentication by all under Heaven."[39]

Political principles also determined the punishments for counterfeiting copper coins, gold, and silver (Article 359). Although all three were instruments of market exchange, it was forgery of the less valuable coins that brought the heaviest punishment (strangulation after the assizes versus penal servitude). Ming commentaries explained the disparity succinctly: "The authority to cast coins resides with the emperor (*Shang*), [and the law] detests the infringement of the imperial prerogative."[40] Shen Zhiqi completed the comparison: "The production of gold and silver comes from the earth; forgers are merely deceiving people to obtain profit, and so the law is light."[41]

As for imposture, a Ming commentary explained that posing as an official or enabling someone else to do so were both punishable by decapitation because they were "injurious to the court's titles and trappings" (*mingqi*).[42] Explanations for Article 361 ("Falsely claiming to be one in close attendance on the emperor, an imperial secretary, or other official") were more concrete. Shen Zhiqi's commentary, echoing that of his Ming predecessors, stated that "Villainous deceit to this point corrupts government and harms the people. The implications are not minor, and therefore the law is extremely severe."[43]

Altogether, Ming and Qing commentaries explained the severity of the Zhawei sentences in terms of the political implications and consequences of the crimes, which infringed on the authority of the Son of Heaven, undermined government, and harmed or disturbed the people. Other deceptions—marketplace fraud, for example—might be sprinkled elsewhere in the code, but Ming and Qing rulers paid special attention, and punished with special severity, misrepresentation of official authority and usurpation of its prerogatives. The late imperial juridical conception of "deception and counterfeiting" was profoundly political, centered on protecting the state rather than social or

economic order at large.

Specific Concerns and Sentencing Guidelines

Within the overarching political framework shown by the commentaries, or on its foundation, the basic statutes point to a set of main issues and concerns in the punishment of forgers and impostors. For forgery these can be reduced to carving, completeness, and use. First, for sentencing purposes in Article 358, the person who actually carved the seal was considered the principal offender, and coconspirators who had not engaged in the physical act of fabricating the seal were punished as accessories.[44] Similarly, Article 355 addressed original fabricators and their accessories, not others who simply copied and transmitted a forgery.[45]

Second was the issue of completeness. It may have been small consolation to the forger of an imperial edict that his failure to complete the document brought the sentence down from decapitation to mere strangulation, but in the eyes of the state this was an important distinction. For seals, the law distinguished between forging (*weizao*) and tracing (*miaomo*). For the former, the characters (*wen*) were the key. Even if a seal was not cast in metal, if it had the basic form of a seal and the characters were complete, then it was considered a forgery (*weizao*). If, on the other hand, there was a seal form but the characters were incomplete, then it was considered "formed but incomplete" (*zao er weicheng*) and the punishment was reduced by one degree. If there was no seal form and the image was only traced on paper, then it was called "tracing" (*miaomo*), which came in for still lighter punishment.[46] Ming and Qing commentators further noted that tracing did not include simply taking up a brush and drawing the likeness of a seal impression ("a three-foot tall boy could tell the difference"), but more clever methods such as copying with seal dyes or tracing onto oil paper and then moistening with seal color and pressing the resulting copy onto the forged document.[47] The importance of completeness, and of the seal, is also evident in a late Ming substatute under Article 355, which provided that if a false yamen document was not stamped with a seal, then for sentencing purposes it did not fall under the Zhawei statutes. The perpetrator should instead be punished for whatever other crime he had committed using the bogus document.[48]

Implicit in the focus on completeness was the issue of apparent authenticity: the more convincing the counterfeit, the more severe the punishment. This in turn related to a third major consideration that applied to all but the highest-level counterfeits: whether or not the forgery had been put to use (*shixing*). If it had not, then the sentence was reduced by one degree.[49] All of these principles—completeness, engraving versus tracing or drawing, and use in the commission of

another crime—can be tied to a larger concern, the amount of damage a given counterfeit could cause. As the Ming commentator Wang Kentang observed, the punishment in Article 358 was especially heavy because, once manufactured, a metal seal with engraved characters could be used more than once and its uses were not restricted to swindling money.[50]

As for impersonation, two overriding concerns in the statutes were the use of counterfeit identification certificates and, with or without them, the fact of extortion or "trying to obtain something."[51] The latter referred to extortionate demands made on officials or common people in provincial jurisdictions. Thus, part of Article 361 specifically addressed unauthorized use of the official courier posts, and two Ming substatutes increased the penalties for offenders who abused officials and people by posing as members of eminent households (the ruling family's, imperial in-laws', or high officials') to appropriate land, extort money, or circumvent various economic prohibitions.[52] Finally, in all of the statutes, forgery and impersonation, officials who knew of the fraud but condoned it were also to be punished.

BALANCING HEAVY AND LIGHT: THE MID-QING RECALIBRATION

In addition to the basic statutes (*lü*), eight of the Zhawei articles also contained a number of substatutes (*li*). Promulgated gradually over the course of the Ming and Qing, often in response to questions about proper sentencing raised by specific cases, substatutes supplemented, modified, and occasionally superseded the contents of the statutes.[53] Unlike the statutes, moreover, substatutes were subject to revision, consolidation, and removal from the code. Against the formal timelessness of the statutes, then, substatutes show patterns of change in law and legal thinking. In the case of Zhawei, they reveal two main trends in the Qing state's approach to forgery and impersonation over the course of the eighteenth century. One was recognizing that many, and perhaps most, deceptions were fairly petty offenses involving the swindling of small sums of money. The other was insisting on severe penalties for those that were not.

Seal Forgery

The mid 1720s saw a recalibration of the seal forgery laws. A new substatute of 1723 increased the punishments to immediate beheading for high-level seals and enslavement in Ninguta (in Jilin) for lower-level ones. This substatute also increased the punishment for swindling with traced (*miaomo*) seal impressions to permanent military exile at an extreme frontier garrison, with no pardon permitted in the event of an amnesty, if the perpetrator had obtained at least fifty ounces of silver.[54] These harsh new standards were qualified in 1727, however, when the Yongzheng emperor issued an edict emphasizing the difference between serious political offenses

and lesser crimes involving only small sums of money. The occasion was a case of three men who forged the official seal of Maoming County, Guangdong, and stamped it on rice vouchers, which they then sold for profit. The Board of Punishments initially recommended immediate beheading, following the new 1723 substatute. Instead of approving the recommendation, however, the emperor called for a revised sentence and a new law:

> The three of them shared 3,100 *wen* in cash, not a large amount and not comparable to using a fake seal to obtain an official post, which is a great transgression of the law. In the past, [the Board] has only deliberated and settled on the provision that counterfeiting a seal be punished with immediate beheading. As to the scale of the impropriety and the relative seriousness of the offense committed, these have not been carefully distinguished. This is not yet appropriate.[55]

The result was a revised substatute that introduced two sets of distinctions. One maintained the new, heavier punishments of 1723 for major transgressions (*dagan faji zhe*) involving military matters, obtaining government monies under false pretenses, or impersonating an official, regardless of what official seal was fabricated (that is, higher-level *yinxin* or lower-level *guanfang* and *yinji*). If, on the other hand, the crime only involved scheming to swindle money and did not touch on one of these special areas, then for forgeries of high-level seals the lighter, pre-1723 punishments of beheading with delay applied where large sums (more than ten ounces of silver or ten strings of cash) were involved, and for lesser sums the punishment would be lighter still: one hundred strokes of the heavy bamboo and exile to a distance of 3,000 *li*. For lower-level seals, the harsher penalty of the 1723 substatute (banishment to Ninguta) applied only if the amount of money obtained was large; otherwise, the original, Ming-era statute applied. The new substatute also reduced the penalty for tracing and swindling to its pre-1723 level and added a provision that such swindles involving less than fifty ounces of silver would be punished on a sliding scale in terms of the amount of money obtained.[56]

The overall effect of this recalibration of 1723–27 was to clearly distinguish especially serious political transgressions from more simply economic crimes, increasing the Ming and early Qing punishments for the former and maintaining or reducing them for the latter. Moreover, it further ranked the lesser crimes by the amount of wealth obtained. This effectively redefined crime and punishment in monetary terms.

Tension between political and economic considerations would continue into the Qianlong and Jiaqing reigns, as evidenced by a

series of statutory revisions intended to strike a proper balance. The first test of the new standards arose over the issue of counterfeit calendars. In cosmo-political theory, an accurate calendar was a key factor in the reigning dynasty's ability to regulate the social order and thereby perpetuate its ruling mandate. The calendar was therefore an extremely important document, and for two millennia successive dynasties had attempted to enforce a monopoly on its production.[57] In the 1730s, a vice-minister at the Court of Imperial Sacrifices invoked the new substatute of 1727 to propose a reduction in the punishment for certain calendar forgeries. The memorialist observed that due to a dearth of official calendars in remote areas, "ignorant people" often copied the official editions, adding yellow pigment to the covers to imitate the Astronomical Bureau's seal, and sold them for little more than ten cash apiece. This perfectly matched the new substatute's provision for "only intending to swindle money or property, the amount obtained not great, less than ten ounces," and the current sentence, decapitation, was therefore excessive.[58] The Codification Office and the emperor agreed, and a new substatute was incorporated into the code of 1740. Specifically addressing "small-time merchants" who copied the official calendar, it set the punishment at exile and beating with the heavy bamboo, reduced one degree for accessories.[59]

Just a few years later, however, this new substatute was struck from the code on two grounds. First, the Yongzheng emperor had already, in 1729, authorized copying and sale of exact replicas of the official calendar in the provinces. The later substatute was therefore superfluous where these were concerned.[60] This left only the production and sale of almanacs with content that *differed* from that in the official calendars. This was politically intolerable. As the Board of Punishments protested,

> The calendar is [the means by which] the heavenly king respectfully delivers the seasons to the people on the first day of the new year.[61] If it is counterfeited, it is not only that the stems and branches will be incorrect and inconvenient for the people; what is more, there is no greater irreverence than this. . . .[62]

The heavier penalty of the original statute should still obtain, the Board concluded, for forgers who departed from the contents of the official calendar. In other words, it hardly mattered that the product was cheap and the cover bore only a splash of yellow instead of a seal. What counted was that someone had usurped imperial prerogatives by making calendrical calculations and distributing them to the people in the emperor's stead. The emperor concurred and the new calendar substatute was removed from the code.[63]

This episode clearly illustrates the tension between, and ambivalence surrounding, two impulses in forgery legislation. In its

initial reduction of statutory sentences for almanac counterfeiters, the state was following the logic of distinguishing between politically significant crimes and less worrisome economic ones. When, four years later, it repealed the new substatute, it was reasserting the fundamental political impetus behind the code. While not rejecting the principle that in some cases forgery for paltry economic gain should be subject to reduced penalties (the sweeping forgery substatute of 1727 remained in effect and faithful calendar pirating was still permitted), the state was reaffirming that usurpation of dynastic prerogatives required extreme penalties regardless of the small-time economic scale of the crime.

The sentence reductions for relatively minor seal forgery offenses also had an interesting ripple effect on the punishments for counterfeiting silver. Ever since the mid-Ming, there had been a trend toward harsher penalties. The basic statutory punishment, established in the Ming, was a hundred strokes of the heavy bamboo and three years' penal servitude.[64] One Ming substatute added a month in the cangue, and another of the 1490s changed penal servitude to military exile.[65] Under the Qing, the punishments were increased again in 1706, to two months in the cangue and exile to Heilongjiang.[66] In an edict of 1723 the Yongzheng emperor opined that this sentence was too light ("People who counterfeit silver are truly hateful"), and ordered revision upward. The new substatute, incorporated into the code in 1727, raised the penalty for principals to strangulation after the assizes with no pardon in the event of a general amnesty.[67]

These increases were rolled back thirteen years later, however, because they had created an imbalance by punishing silver counterfeiting more harshly than some varieties of seal forgery (those "only scheming to cheat money"). The sentences were largely returned to their 1706 levels, with exile to southern miasmic regions instead of Heilongjiang and repeal of the prohibition on pardons.[68] Thus, growing intolerance for silver counterfeiting, which stemmed no doubt from economic considerations, bumped into the partial softening on seal forgeries, which had also resulted from economic considerations (in this case, lighter punishments for forgeries that only had economic repercussions). When the new punishments collided, one on the way up and the other on the way down, jurists could not allow silver transgressions to outweigh seal transgressions, and so the silver penalties were revised downward. Silver counterfeiting was troubling and even "hateful," but it was not as odious as seal counterfeiting. The basic politics of dynastic legitimacy retained precedence over economics.

Returning to seal forgery, in 1817 a new substatute limited the circumstances in which a counterfeit could be considered "formed but

incomplete." Henceforward, only if the characters were truly incomplete and the seal had not been put to use in a successful swindle could the sentence be reduced. If it was merely missing a few strokes and had been put to use, then the original forgery statute's sentences (beheading for high-level seals, three years' penal servitude for lower-level) applied—for those who had obtained large sums of money. Those who obtained smaller sums, however, would be sentenced to exile or servitude. This new substatute of 1817 thus introduced both a stricter definition of "incompleteness" (reaffirming the original statute) and a quantitative sentencing formula that, as the Qing official and legal scholar Xue Yunsheng (1820–1901) would later observe, determined life or death on the basis of how much loot the culprits had acquired.[69]

Along with distinguishing between "light" and "heavy" crimes, a second issue to emerge in this period was the relative culpability of mastermind and carver when they were not the same person, as when someone paid an engraver to forge a seal. A substatute of 1733 introduced lighter punishments for yamen underlings who hired carvers, classifying them as accessories. This was in keeping with the code's fundamental principle that the carver was the principal offender. Both this substatute and the larger legal tradition behind it were reversed in 1760, however. Henceforward, in all seal forgery cases, if the mastermind conspired with someone to share the loot and that person did the carving, then both should be sentenced as principals. If the carver was merely paid a small fee and did not conspire to share the loot, then the mastermind should be considered principal and the carver accessory.[70]

This change inverted the traditional apportioning of blame, ensuring that masterminds would not get off lightly and redefining paid carvers as supporting actors. Xue Yunsheng took strong exception to this substatute. He had no objection to giving masterminds their just deserts, but argued that the original statute correctly treated the carver as principal because "this kind of scoundrel, if he lacked engraving skill then it would be difficult for him to realize his treacherous schemes."[71] Xue's point is illuminating, in that it contrasts a simple, original distinction focused on the physical act of seal carving with a more complex new one based on conspiracy (or intent) and the amount of benefit each participant stood to derive from the crime.

Impersonation

The impersonation statutes underwent a similar development, showing comparable tensions between political and economic interpretations of crime. On the political side, there was a clear trend toward increasing the severity of the originally prescribed

punishments, and also extending the statutes to cover new or increasingly troublesome areas of political transgression. Just as a Ming substatute of 1543 had extended the punishments for seal (*yinxin*) forgery to *guanfang* and *yinji*, which were at the time new types of seals bestowed on officials holding ad hoc or other temporary assignments, so did a Qing substatute of the mid 1720s extend the law on impersonating officials to cover impersonation of subofficial functionaries (*zazhi*), an indispensable and increasingly numerous class of personnel in local administration. The new substatute resulted from the Yongzheng emperor's personal intervention in the sentencing of two *jiansheng* who had posed as department vice magistrates. The Board of Civil Appointments had recommended penal servitude and beatings, in accordance with the statute on falsely claiming to be an official without the use of forged identification documents (Article 360.2), commuted to no punishment at all as the crimes had occurred in the period covered by a general amnesty. The emperor overruled the Board with a strongly worded edict that read in part:

> Official ranks great and minor all concern the titles and trappings of the state, and people who falsely assume them deceive the ruler and steal the titles and trappings of the state. The offense is no less serious than the Ten Abominations, for which there is no amnesty, and it is reasonable that no pardon should be allowed. . . . Should they only be sentenced to penal servitude and beating, it will not be enough to manifest discipline.[72]

The resulting substatute increased the punishment for posing as an official (without fake identification documents) to military exile at a frontier garrison with no amnesty allowed. Criminals who also forged identity documents would as before be sentenced to beheading.[73]

Thirty years later, another imposture case elicited a more complex reaction from the Qianlong emperor. The occasion was the sentencing of Tong Rude, who had knowingly purchased a forged identity certificate and reported for duty as a county jailor in Zhejiang.[74] The Board of Punishments recommended decapitation for the forger but only military exile for Tong, the impostor. A disapproving emperor insisted that he, too, should be sentenced to death.

> The crime and the sentence are in extreme discord. Officials high and low are all the court's great vessels. . . . The swindler, of course, cannot escape the law. As for the criminal who purchased [the credentials], he dared to knowingly pose as [an official] and went to visit superiors. His disdain for imperial regulations, is it not extreme? . . . In broad daylight, how can we allow a phony official to sit in dignity above the people? . . . Can such a one as this, reckless and despising the

> law, be allowed to distort the distinction between superior and inferior?[75]

This indignant edict emphasized political fundamentals that predated the imperial period. Like his father's edict and at least one Ming commentary (both quoted above), it centered on the concept of *mingqi*, which referred to the titles (*ming*) and corresponding trappings (*qi*, such as ceremonial vehicles and clothing) conferred on nobles and officials by the state. The *locus classicus* was a passage in the *Zuo Commentary* (Zuo zhuan) on the *Spring and Autumn Annals* (Chunqiu) in which a meritorious official, Zhongshu Yuxi, was offered a city but requested instead the ceremonial hanging musical instruments and horse trappings of a feudal lord. His request was granted, a ritual violation that led Confucius to declaim on the importance of reserving ceremonial trappings only for those who held the corresponding ranks, and on the dangers of giving them falsely or to "false persons" (*jiaren*).[76] In Legge's translation (with *ming* rendered as "names" and *qi* as "articles of use"):

> Alas! It would have been better to give him many cities. It is only peculiar articles of use, and names, which cannot be granted to other [than those to whom they belong];—to them a ruler has particularly to attend. It is by [the right use of] names that he secures the confidence [of the people]; . . . it is in those articles that the ceremonial distinctions of rank are hid. . . . Attention to these things is the condition of [good] government. If they be conceded where they ought not to be conceded, it is giving away the government to the recipients. When the government thus perishes, the State will follow it;—it is not possible to arrest that issue.[77]

In short, scrupulous control of titles and trappings was fundamental to the very survival of the state.

In addition to its basic meaning of "titles and trappings," *mingqi* came by extension to be a metaphor for officials as "famous vessels," in the sense of pillars of state.[78] Both meanings were redolent of the titles and status markers the ruling house conferred on officials and no one else, the integrity of the administrative apparatus, and the legitimacy of the state itself.[79] In using the term and evoking the classical passage, the Ming commentary and two Qing emperors were insisting on the foundational importance of rank distinctions to dynastic authority and legitimacy. Conceding them, as the Sage had observed, would be giving away the government and dooming the state. Obviously, the code could not be soft on this point.

Indignation and reasserting the importance of *mingqi* were only half of the Qianlong emperor's response to the Tong Rude case, however. He had been sufficiently annoyed by the sentence

recommendation to go back and peruse the statutes, and issued a second edict the next day. He began by criticizing officials for muddleheaded application of the laws. The basic statute's meaning was quite clear, he observed, but the accumulated commentaries were causing confusion and prompting officials to wrongly invoke various substatutes. Although most officials would not dare to abuse the law for private gain, unscrupulous yamen clerks might take advantage to engage in fraud, and the resulting differences in sentencing could be substantial. "The connection to royal regulations and the people's lives [*wangzhang minming*] is enormous."[80]

Here the emperor was moving on to a second issue, evenhandedness in the meting out of justice. Not all impostures were the same, the edict continued:

> There is falsely wearing an official cap but only scheming for local glory. There is falsely claiming to be an official but with the intent to carry it out [only] once to cheat one person. And then there is daring to assume a name and proceed to the post, wanting to rule the people and have authority, despising the law like Tong Rude. If distinctions are not made between the different levels . . . then when [the penalty] should be light but is relatively heavy, what of the people's lives? And when it should be heavy but is relatively light, what of the king's regulations?[81]

The emphasis here was on distinguishing the "light" from the "heavy" in criminal cases in order to arrive at balanced sentences, attentive not only to "the king's regulations" but also to "the people's lives." In this way, the edict concluded, "things will be weighed and measured out evenly, and all will be clear and just."[82] The phrase "weigh things and measure [them] out evenly" (*cheng wu pingshi*), which came from the *Classic of Changes*, had since early imperial times served as a metaphor for distinguishing the light from the weighty and passing appropriate sentences.[83] Thus, at the same time that the emperor was invoking Confucius to draw a strict line against those who dared to impersonate officials, he was also calling on officials to differentiate between the truly threatening and the relatively benign. Together these two edicts, issued only a day apart, epitomized the search for balance between two key principles, insistence on political bedrock and compassion for petty offenders, that characterized juridical trends with regard to Zhawei in the eighteenth century.

There was another undercurrent running through these edicts, a certain imperial unease with official handling of imposture cases. The emperor made very clear his opinion that the law had been misinterpreted and misapplied, and that the proliferation of commentaries and substatutes was opening the way for juridical

sleight of hand that could enable culprits to get off lightly. The second edict was almost defensive in its assurances that he took great pains to judge cases carefully and evenhandedly. It leaves the impression of a monarch who was worried that in their sentence recommendations officials were taking matters into their own hands and drifting away from the political essentials. From this perspective, the enumeration of heavier and lighter crimes reads like an imperial acknowledgment of concerns and tendencies emerging from below.

Both edicts ended with commands that the board deliberate to revise the law, distinguishing among various levels of imposture without losing the clarity and intent of the original statutes. The result was a trio of new substatutes addressing three specific varieties of impersonation, and with guidelines similar to those in the abovementioned deliberations over forgery. One substatute added to the ranks of those who should be sentenced to decapitation (with delay) anyone who, like Tong Rude, bought a deceased appointee's credentials and, assuming his identity, proceeded to the post.[84] The original punishment, in the early Qing, had been exile at a distance of 3,000 *li*, the logic being that such posers should be punished less severely than those who actually forged credentials.[85] Hereafter forger-impostors, forger-sellers, and buyer-impostors would all be subject to the same punishment. In other words, the new substatute insisted on beheading (with delay) for all criminals who used forged credentials to impersonate an official, regardless of who had done the forging.[86] This change paralleled that for seal forgery. Just as the criminal who hired someone to forge a seal was now considered a principal offender, so too was the impostor who had purchased false credentials rather than forging them himself.

A second substatute addressed perpetrators who assumed the name of a specific living and active official but did not forge an identification certificate (*pingzha*) and only planned a single deception of a solitary victim. Those who in the process obtained between 50 and 100 ounces of silver were to be sentenced to military exile on a near frontier (2,500 *li*), and for those who got between 100 and 120 ounces the sentence would be strangulation with delay.[87] These were not light punishments (indeed, one was more severe than that prescribed in 1727), but as with the new forgery laws they introduced a monetary measure of a crime's seriousness and varied the sentences accordingly.

The third new substatute concerned still lesser crimes. If someone wore an official hat knob and falsely claimed to be an official but was only scheming for "local glory," attempted no extortion, and used no identification certificate, the punishment would now be sixty strokes of the heavy bamboo and a year of penal servitude. An even lighter

sentence (one hundred strokes of the heavy bamboo) would apply for impersonating a *shengyuan* or *jiansheng*.[88] This was a return to the original Qing statute's penalty for all impostors who did not use bogus identification, and a drastic reduction from the military exile required in 1727.

Together these three substatutes superseded that of 1727.[89] As with revisions of the forgery laws, they reflected official recognition that some crimes were quite petty in motivation and the corresponding principle that punishments should vary with the "lightness or heaviness" (*qingzhong*) of the offense. Like the 1727 substatute that reconceived seal forgery in economic terms and measured many of the crimes on a monetary scale, moreover, these substatutes introduced new measures of the seriousness of an impersonation, including whether or not the perpetrator committed extortion, the amount of money obtained, the number of deceptions and victims, and even the purpose of the imposture. In short, Qing emperors and jurists were introducing lighter punishments for crimes in which the motivations were petty and the effects quantifiably limited.

Police Impersonation

Lastly, political considerations were more in the ascendant for one type of imposture, although even here there would be gradations according to the seriousness of the offense and the amount of money obtained. The mid-Qing state became increasingly aware of the police impersonation problem, and sought to combat it with preventive measures and heavier punishments. We have already noted the prohibitions against runners' assistants and changes in the procedures governing warrants and registration at distant yamens. These measures were primarily responses to the extortionate practices of yamen runners and their assistants and surrogates, and only secondarily to imposture. In the area of law, however, the Qing code clearly shows that impersonation itself attracted increasing attention from the state over the course of the eighteenth century.

Although most phony policemen were small-time operators, their misdeeds incurred heavy punishments. The crime usually fell under Article 360 or Article 361.[90] Article 360, statute 2, contained the basic formula (italics mine): "If one who is not an official . . . falsely claims to be an official in order to obtain something he wants, *or falsely claims to be sent by an official to make an arrest* . . . he will receive one hundred strokes of the heavy bamboo and penal servitude of three years."[91] This statute dated to the Ming and had clear antecedents in the Tang code.[92] Article 361, which was derived from it, drew out particularly serious offenses for special attention.[93] In the eighteenth century runner impersonation came to occupy a special place here, the

crimes becoming more visible and the penalties harsher. In particular, substatute 2 underwent a series of changes. In the Ming and early Qing it had specifically addressed impersonation of an imperial guard officer.[94] In 1725 the Codification Office expanded the substatute's coverage, replacing "imperial guard officer" with "runners of the various yamens" (*ge yamen renyi*) but otherwise preserving the original language. The expanded substatute now addressed those who "deceitfully pose as runners from various yamens and, under pretext of being sent to investigate matters or arrest criminals, occupy official hostels, seize commoners, extort wealth, and disturb soldiers and common people." The basic punishments, depending upon the amount of money extorted, were military exile at a frontier garrison or a beating with the heavy bamboo, both preceded by a month in the cangue.[95]

As Xue Yunsheng noted, this substatute could have been removed from the code when its original subject (the crime of posing as an imperial guardsman and availing oneself of the imperial courier post stations to commit various abuses) disappeared.[96] While Xue did not elaborate on the reasoning behind the substitution, we know that in the Ming period imperial bodyguards had "cooperated with influential eunuchs in maintaining an empire-wide, irregular police and judicial service."[97] Once this ceased to be the case and guardsmen no longer had opportunities to frequent the post stations, the law addressed a crime that had become obsolete. Rather than eliminate the substatute, however, the Qing codifiers changed the object of impersonation from guardsmen to yamen runners. This effectively replaced a narrow old law with a broad new one. By keeping it in its original place under Article 361, moreover, the codifiers were also retaining the substatute's original significance as a singling out of particularly serious impostures that involved policing as a pretext for extortion. The timing of this statutory change also suggests that by the 1720s the state was taking special notice of runner impersonation—perhaps, we can speculate, because such crimes were becoming more frequent or widespread than in former times. One problem had disappeared, but another had taken its place.

An addition to the substatute, promulgated in 1759, addressed "scoundrels" (*guntu*) posing as runners in order to rob passenger boats.[98] The new item followed on the heels of a report from Hubei that small gangs of thieves were openly preying on passenger boats on the Yangzi River, posing as runners and using the pretext of inspecting for smuggled goods to board the boats, search the passengers' baggage, and rob them. Officials were punishing these brigands as common thieves, the provincial administration commissioner observed, when in fact they should be punished more severely for

posing as yamen runners. The Board of Punishments concurred and the recommendation became law.[99] As with the substatute's new focus on phony yamen runners, the addition of false river inspectors suggests that such crimes were becoming more common during the eighteenth century.

A more far-reaching shift in sentencing standards took place in 1800, when the same substatute was modified again to increase the punishments for posers who used forged warrants or carried chains. They would now receive the same punishments as actual runners who committed these offenses. As before, the new sentences would be measured out as functions of how much money had been extorted, but in the original substatute the basic standard was Article 269, Non-manifest theft.[100] Now crimes featuring bogus warrants or chains were instead subject to the harsher standards of the substatute on "verminous underlings" fraudulently obtaining property (*duyi zhazang*).[101] Extorting as little as six ounces of silver, for example, would now bring a sentence of three years' penal servitude instead of a month in the cangue and a beating, and ten ounces would incur military exile.[102] This was in line with a proposal submitted by the governor of Yunnan, who argued that, "These kinds of criminals, although they are not real runners, their vicious bluff and bluster is truly no different from the runners'. . . . Hereafter, whoever poses as a runner to extort money or property . . . should be sentenced according to the runner statutes."[103] That is, phony runners should receive the same sentences as real ones. Further revisions of this substatute in 1801, 1806, and 1812 increased the sentences if threats or intimidation were involved or if a victim was beaten to death or driven to suicide.[104]

Just as impostures evolved as a reflection of real abuses, then, so did their punishments come to follow the penalties for those abuses. The code first punished simple theft, then extortions perpetrated by "verminous runners," and then extortions committed by commoners mimicking those runners. Similarly, whereas the original sentencing guidelines simply increased punishments as a function of the amount extorted, by 1800 the codifiers had effectively introduced a new measure on top of that, requiring heavier penalties across the board for more *authentic* impostures, those that employed basic tokens or symbols of official authority.

This statutory evolution reflected a change in official thinking about runner impersonation, a growing realization that the perpetrators were not common thieves but abusers of official power. The Hubei administration commissioner had made this very point in 1759, in his memorial on phony river inspectors, and penalties for a range of police impersonations increased in the ensuing decades.

These changes were part of the general trend, begun in the 1720s, toward more severe punishments for egregious Zhawei offenses. They also indicated that criminal exploits were raising the profile of runner impersonation within the larger "deception and counterfeiting" framework.[105]

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The significance of the legal term Zhawei changed over time. In Han and Wei law it probably denoted a single statute, but beyond the obvious theme of deception we do not know what that statute contained. Various law codes throughout the period between Han and Tang contained sections variously entitled Zha or Zhawei and apparently encompassing numerous crimes from "lying and deceiving" and forging edicts to deceptively avoiding corveé labor. The twenty-seven Zhawei statutes in the Tang code covered a wide variety of deceptions, many—but not all—of them being abuses or misappropriations of official authority that threatened to damage the state's reputation. This emphasis grew more pronounced over time, and in the early Ming the section shrank to twelve statutes almost exclusively focused on the problem of deceptive misappropriation of official authority. The punishments were severe.

Interpretive tensions soon emerged, however, and substatutory changes in the eighteenth century in particular reveal ambivalence over the political gravity of, and appropriate punishments for, many Zhawei offenses. Case records indicate that most forgers and impersonators were small-time operators in it for the money or free travel, and a series of new substatutes reduced the punishments for obviously petty offenders who did not carry their deceptions too far.

These changes marked the official response to a changing criminal environment, itself a reflection of general trends in late imperial society that gained renewed momentum with the consolidation of peace and order in the middle Qing: commercialization and monetization of the economy, increasing literacy, and population growth. All of these contributed to a heightened competition for local economic and political resources and to the criminal activities that accompanied such competition. Put another way, the partial depoliticization of the Zhawei statutes reflected a dawning recognition by eighteenth-century jurists that symbols of official authority had become tools in an expanding environment of small-time economic crime.

This depoliticization trend had its limits, however. The Yongzheng and Qianlong emperors jealously guarded the symbols of imperial and official authority and insisted on their basic inviolability. Thus, the political impulses that had created the Zhawei statutes remained in operation and outweighed the economic considerations that

threatened to undermine them. Both the statutory discourse and the rhetoric of provincial case narratives indicate that this interpretive tension was never fully resolved.

Qing emperors and officials viewed a criminal landscape generously dotted with lowly protagonists availing themselves of government resources in the quest for daily survival. They were hardly pleased by the sight, but they recognized that many crimes stemmed from petty economic motivations and that the existing legal and punitive regime, fundamentally political in conception, was inordinately harsh in such cases. While the fundamental political imperatives underlying the law remained, the social and economic ground had shifted, and jurists found themselves recalibrating crimes and punishments in the new environment.

Conclusion

THIS STUDY BEGAN WITH AN UNEMPLOYED MULE DRIVER WHO hoped to gain some respect by showing his family a medal supposedly conferred on him by an imperial prince. It was a dim plan and an odd case, but Qing jurists quickly found a logical place for it in the world of crime and punishment. More than an analogy to document forgery, moreover, Xiong Shixian's folly and his fate reflected a larger social and institutional environment in which money, status, and political authority were closely intertwined.

The deceptions described in this book straddled government and everyday life. They were in fact a product of the intersection of these two worlds. The ranks of forgers and impostors mainly comprised men who were unsuccessful in their occupations and looking for new prospects. Some operated in their home environments, more took to the road, and all of them seized on opportunities presented by the state and its institutions. In government documents, official status, or both, they saw paths to money, food, clothing, and lodging. These things could come via direct requisition of official resources, proxy handling of tax payments and title purchases, extortion of innocent victims, or the hospitality of strangers who took pity on the stranded but respectable traveler. In some cases, status ambition was as important as material desire; the same imposture could be both a survival strategy and a mobility strategy.

OFFICIAL RESOURCES AND SOCIAL POWER

Forgery and impersonation occurred all over the country and throughout the eighteenth century, China's premodern peak of administrative efficiency, and they mirrored political power structures. The heyday of high-level impersonation was the late Kangxi and Yongzheng years, when the new state had consolidated its control over China but the monarchy had not yet stabilized itself and tamed the rest of the conquest elite. As the succession process settled down and bureaucratic communications were elaborated and institutionalized, the great opportunities for political mischief making dissipated—and with them their reflections in the world of fraud. Down below, however, at the more mundane levels of local administration in the provinces, forgery and impersonation continued apace into the nineteenth century. This was because local landscapes were still rife with opportunities.

In his pioneering case study and meditation on the nature of the late imperial state and the society it ruled, Philip Kuhn discusses "the politics of the impacted society" of eighteenth-century China; that is, a society in which life chances were increasingly limited by the combined effects of rapid population growth, dwindling resources, and "declining social mobility."[1]

> In late imperial China, most people lacked the access to political power that would have enabled them to compete, one interest against another, for social resources. . . . [P]ower was available to most people only in fantasy, or in the occasional opportunity to exploit such free-floating social power as a state campaign against deviants. Only extraordinary circumstances could give the powerless a sudden opportunity to better their lives or to strike at their enemies.[2]

Kuhn is speaking here of the widespread "score-settling" that accompanied the sorcery scare of 1768, when rumors that sorcerers were stealing people's souls, in many cases by cutting their queues, spread through several provinces in the lower Yangzi region and north China. Once the Qianlong emperor convinced himself that the queue-cutting reflected an anti-Manchu conspiracy and forced his reluctant provincial bureaucracy to mount a systematic hunt for the perpetrators, commoners seized the opportunity to settle old scores by falsely accusing their enemies of engaging in sorcery.[3] The official campaign thus created opportunities for normally powerless people to suddenly acquire and exercise social power, if only against neighborhood enemies and hapless strangers.

Fraud, too, reflected the politics of the impacted society. Even where the motivations appeared to be purely material, the crimes reveal another type of "free-floating social power": not the extraordinary circumstance of an occasional campaign, but the very ordinary, everyday presence and structure of government itself. Official documents and state agents commanded resources (wealth, title, and social leverage) that were beyond the reach of most subjects. By forging a document or posing as a representative of the state, the powerless commoner could hope to avail himself, if only briefly, of those resources. It was an everyday possibility requiring no political convulsion to set it in motion.

Our criminals were for the most part losers in the competitive impacted society of eighteenth-century China. In their schemes for wealth and status, or simply food and shelter, they made use of the resources available to them. For forgers these included calligraphic and engraving skill and, in some cases, clerical experience at a government yamen. Most people could not reproduce the special bureaucratic formats and prose required for official documents—directives, warrants, certificates of rank, vouchers, receipts, and so on. Still less could they forge the official seals that authenticated these documents. Those who could, or who knew enough to think they could try, held an advantage over the rest. They possessed not only varying degrees of basic or functional literacy, but also at least a smattering of what I would call official or bureaucratic literacy.[4] For

impostors the chief advantage was similar yamen experience, or knowledge of official appearances and procedures gained in other ways. Humble as these resources may have been, they enabled the protagonists to present themselves as something more, someone more powerful, than they actually were. These frauds were turning bits of life experience and knowledge into higher status and material gain.

The resources and opportunities themselves were in flux. Had a humble bannerman visited provincial governors with talk of a prince's tour at the end of the Qianlong period, for example, instead of late in the Kangxi reign, he would probably have been exposed immediately. Had the phony district jailor who reported for duty in Hubei in 1735 faced an experienced magistrate instead of a green probationer, that case, too, would have come to an earlier conclusion. Throughout the Qing period, those wishing to engage in proxy contributions fraud had to be attuned not only to the opening and closing of subscription periods but also to changes in the processing requirements. There were even subterranean shifts in law and adjudication, as evidenced by the changing treatment of engravers and the trend toward depoliticization of the more petty offenses.

ARENAS OF DECEPTION

In her work on "litigation masters" Melissa Macauley argues that the retrenchment of the post-Tang imperial state effectively created space for local power brokers to operate between the central government and local society, and in many cases to bring formal state power to bear in adjudicating legal disputes that were normally subject to informal mediation procedures. By the Qing period large numbers of litigation masters were serving a clear social function, meeting the needs of both local elites and weaker commoners seeking to resist them, especially in the increasingly competitive, commercialized environment of the lower Yangzi and southeast coastal regions. Macauley notes that while many litigation masters were lower literati who possessed specialized legal knowledge, "the majority were simply educated, literate men with some experience in urban life" (the magistrates' courts being located in county, prefectural, and provincial seats).[5] In short, she describes an environment in which the state was not in full control of its own legal machinery and the basic qualifications enabling an outsider to manipulate it were literacy and urban experience.

Similar dynamics facilitated forgery and impersonation. Like litigation masters, forgers relied on literacy (along with other skills), and both forgers and impostors relied on some kind of experience with government administration. It is also evident that some forgers began, at least, by serving useful functions for which people who lacked the time or knowledge of official procedure were willing to pay. This was

clearly the case for proxy tax remittance and proxy purchase of official titles through contribution, beneficial services when the silver reached state coffers.

The similarities to "litigation trickery" faded, however, when the arrangements were phony or fell through and service gave way to fraud. While litigation masters served as "power brokers," enabling their clients to either enforce or transcend the limits of local dispute resolution processes, in the latter case linking state and locale where they had been separated, the forger or impersonator brought only the appearance of official authority, inducing compliance with his demands and siphoning off resources for personal profit. The litigation master profited by bringing local disputes under the purview of a reluctant state, whereas the forger or impostor profited by defrauding or extorting people who *thought* they were dealing with the state.

Crimes of forgery and impersonation also dovetailed with the plaint writing of litigation masters, particularly when the latter involved false accusations, in that both involved illicit manipulation of official resources in social spaces created by the limited reach of government administration. Bogus documents and phony officials stood outside the system they claimed to represent. When forged or played well, they appeared to represent the state (and, in theory, the public good) while in fact they served whatever private interest the perpetrator happened to be pursuing. They were in effect beyond the state's control. The post-Tang state's tactical retreat thus created room for both the litigation master's power brokerage and the fraud's power games.

OFFICIAL WEAKNESSES

Forgery and impersonation were reflections and byproducts of the imperial state, illicit popular activities inspired by the workings of the official apparatus. Qing rulers guarded the tools and symbols of power jealously, officials did the emperor's bidding when it served their interests or they had to, and bold characters among the general populace appropriated these agents' symbols and identities for the material and status benefits they could bring. For monarchs seeking to expand the power of the state and maintain or increase their control over the bureaucracy, the crimes were especially galling because they appropriated authority, diverted resources, and mocked the ruler's efforts to enforce order. They also reminded him that the state was not working as well as it should, and that there was little he could do about it.

There is no reason to assume that Qing China was more susceptible to fraud in general than other premodern societies, but certain aspects of the ruling system were conducive to misrepresentation.[6] These included tensions between personal and bureaucratic authority,

especially in the century following the conquest; the limited administrative capacities of regular provincial officialdom, which shortened its reach and weakened its hold on local society; and, a corollary of this limitation, the use of privately hired, extra-statutory underlings to perform many of the tasks of daily government among the populace. The face of officialdom did not, therefore, always look very official, and this helped to create an environment in which forgery and impersonation were possible.

The state's capacity to patrol the boundaries of its own authority was compromised to some extent by the very nature of the Qing power structure. At each level of the political and administrative hierarchy, clearly identified title-holders above channeled their authority through indeterminate numbers of official, quasi-official, or completely unofficial subordinates below. The former possessed power as well as authority, and the latter could exercise lesser forms of power by virtue of their association with their superiors or masters. Thus, even a short-term and technically illegal policeman elicited fear, respect, or at least resignation when he practiced extortion, because as an agent of the state he wielded official power. Similarly, provincial governors treated a prince's servant well, or at least with care, because he was his master's agent. Some of the "big man's" power thus extended, by association, both to official subordinates and to members of his household, be they relatives or servants.

This conflation of official and private identities was to a considerable degree a function of the late imperial state's minimalist approach to government administration. Statutory limits on the size of the bureaucracy and sub-bureaucracy ensured that much, and perhaps most, of the day-to-day business of government was handled by subofficial functionaries and private hirelings. Moreover, many of these low-level agents of the state were not as easily recognized and identifiable as their superiors. Such men wielded authority and commanded respect (or at least compliance) even though they lacked most of the physical trappings that represented official authority both inside and outside of the yamen.

It was, additionally, an establishment in flux. Even regular official posts were held in rotation, and circulating through and around the bureaucracy were large numbers of men with official rank and titles ranging not only from substantive to honorary but also from expectant and newly appointed to temporary, on leave, and retired. The inherent fluidity of this system was conducive to misrepresentation. Altogether, then, at its edges and lower reaches where the populace most often encountered it, the state's appearance could be murky and unpredictable. It was not too difficult to "look" official there, and this circumstance, together with the lure of wealth that official agents

could extract from the populace, created an arena for fraudulent activities.

In a very real sense these crimes were bequeathed to us by the late imperial state. It was the state that defined the transgressions, inscribed its interpretations in the code, prosecuted the malefactors and created the archival record. "The state," however, was not a monolith. It existed in several layers, with the emperor and ruling house at the top; the conquest elite and capital officialdom beneath him; governors, prefects, and magistrates in the provinces; and yamen underlings and their assistants at the bottom. The interests and motivations of these groups did not always coincide. Meng Guanzu's tour of the provinces, for example, incensed and worried the Kangxi emperor, but played out quietly in the provincial bureaucracy until the emperor ordered an investigation. Hunan governor Udasan complained that local officials condoned seal forgery by yamen underlings, routinely sweeping it under the judicial carpet. And when Xia Yinglong was finally caught five years after he assumed the identity "Fu Tianbao," it came to light that in the intervening period he had been arrested three times in Shandong and Shanxi, but in each case had evaded discovery by posing as a military degree holder.[7] While the crimes were deemed serious in the upper echelons of the state, then, lower officialdom was not always vigilant or forthcoming with crime reports.[8]

All of this raises a question that is perhaps impossible to answer; namely, if officials were not detecting or reporting the crimes with alacrity, then how many frauds never entered the official record? In the lowly realm of police impersonation, this number may have been quite large. Higher up the official and social ladder, Luo Fenpeng's escapade, in which he was arrested only accidentally during a gambling raid, suggests that there could have been others like him who were never discovered.

KNOWLEDGE, EXPERIENCE, AND UNCERTAINTY

Deceptions took place along the porous institutional boundaries where state and populace met. The layered, formal and semiformal quality of political authority effectively created zones of uncertainty that could be exploited not only by official underlings themselves, but also by shrewd boundary crossers from outside. Thus, the hazy quality of informal power made it a free-floating resource that could be harnessed by men who had the knowledge, experience, and savvy to cast themselves in the underling's role. Anyone who had at some time in the past served in some sub-official capacity, as a yamen underling or an official's private servant, was a potential boundary crosser. So, too, was anyone who had seen official documents close up or observed state functionaries in action: a merchant who had purchased an

honorary studentship, a student who had read a magistrate's proclamation, a peasant who had paid his taxes by proxy, a day-laborer who had seen constables arrest a thief, a mule driver who had happened upon an official procession.

Such knowledge and experience, rudimentary as it might have been, was more than the typical subject possessed, and when confronted with it typical subjects were at a disadvantage. They might doubt the boldly professed identity of the fraud or the authenticity of a document, but could they be sure? How were they to distinguish the true from the false? If one refused to comply only to discover that the errand was in fact legitimate, then he might be hauled before the magistrate to pay for his mistake. Those who lacked the fraud's knowledge or experience could easily become his victims.

Recent scholarship on Qing law has demonstrated that far from being cowed by the thought of a visit to the yamen, many people went to court and engaged in protracted litigation over land, marital, and other disputes.[9] The exploits of phony capital agents, local officials, and policemen partly confirm and partly complicate this view. Like the litigants who clogged Qing dockets, frauds were clearly willing to use the state for their own purposes, and many of them were quite bold about it. The recent literature on litigiousness is, moreover, a useful antidote to earlier views of a people unwilling to brave the financial burdens and physical dangers of the magistrate's court. On the other hand, police impersonation cases leave little doubt that the yamen was still a fearsome place for many common people. This fear is precisely what the phony runner banked on when accosting his would-be victim. To the poor, weak, or faint of heart, an encounter with yamen runners could be a terrifying ordeal.

PHYSICAL SPACE AND INDIVIDUAL MOBILITY

Frauds could exploit political, administrative, and cognitive spaces, spaces that were manifest in political uncertainty, knowledge gaps, and the tenuous relationship between the state and the general population. Equally important and facilitating were the opportunities created by physical space; that is, by physical distances and human mobility. Meng Guangzu was free to enjoy his tour of the provinces, and it lasted so long, partly because he was far from the prying eyes of the capital. Luo Fenpeng, enjoying the life of the traveling literatus, simply took to the road whenever his benefactors became suspicious. Prevailing upon native-place sentiment, he was free to commit imposture precisely because he was not in his native place. As for the forgeries perpetrated on the margins of the contributions system, it was the protagonists' positions as middlemen between local clients and the far-away provincial or dynastic capital that enabled them to pocket silver intended for state coffers.[10] Physical distance played a

role in police impersonation as well, though here the dynamics were more varied. While some phony constables accosted neighbors or local acquaintances, many were outsiders preying on strangers. In this way they could hope to avoid recognition and also to disappear without arousing suspicion. In short, their identities and future livelihoods were not tied to the scenes of the crimes.

Conversely, the fact that most fraud was perpetrated by outsiders and not locals suggests that the home town or village, in which many people knew the protagonist and it was not difficult for yamen runners to find him once local officials had learned of a crime, was not fertile ground for fraudulent activities. It was when the fraud stepped out of this home context that he had the best chances of success, and these chances were enhanced by the circumstances of a minimalist government in a preindustrial but rapidly commercializing society. Physical distances and mobile populations limited the state's effectiveness in policing its prerogatives and resources.

ROGUE ACTORS IN THE STATE-AND-SOCIETY RELATIONSHIP

The protagonists in these cases seized on available resources to escape poverty and obscurity, and in so doing they won places in the historical record. They became somebodies of sorts, but lowly, infamous somebodies who after momentary success ended up worse off than they had begun (although, of course, we only know of the ones who got caught). Some of them seemed to be acting out fantasies as well: the bannerman visiting provincial governors posing as the Third Prince's agent; the poor carter authorizing his own wagon to go through customs barriers unmolested; the down-on-his luck scholar using his calligraphic skill to forge a token of imperial favor; the would-be constable who could not wait to be hired before extorting another villager; and the ne'er-do-well turning his memory of a commissioner's procession into a medal of honor.

There is something else. Although we cannot read their hearts and minds, it does appear that some of these characters enjoyed what they were doing. Kong Chuanyi must have taken some satisfaction in the letters he crafted in the voice of the Duke for Fulfilling the Sage. "Fuweilie" became a celebrity in Dongliu County. Luo Fenpeng got to see the Qianlong emperor, if only from a distance during a southern tour, and he also took in the sights of beautiful Hangzhou while the silver held out. Fifteen years later Hangzhou provided similar diversions for the phony provincial registrar Dang Linhan and his accomplice, Li Ming. They visited the City God temple (evidently a must even for fake officials) and also enjoyed the pleasure spots in the hills.[11] Hua Wenzhao fooled a host of dupes and seemed to take some pride in his performance. Wang Yue, who pretended to be the adoptive son of the Fifth Prince, spiced up his story by claiming that

over the door to his house hung two clubs bestowed by the prince: "The yellow club is for beating department magistrates, and the red club is for beating county magistrates. Even if I beat one to death, I wouldn't be punished."[12]

As for Xia Yinglong, was he wholly grim or rather enjoying the hunt when he walked into the *shengyuan* Liao Ke's inn looking for a chess partner? After a few rounds of chess and some tea he declared, "I think you are a lucky man," and, dropping an initial alias, confided his "true" identity: Fu Tianbao, a marquis and princess consort from the capital, on a secret mission to gather intelligence on the Muslims of Gansu. He persuaded Liao to take an oath of brotherhood at a nearby temple and then dispatched him to Beijing to deliver a letter to his mother. She would go to the palace and inform the emperor, "Fu" explained, and recommend Liao for an official post as well. Xia even showed Liao the letter, so he could see that it was all true. He also told him to seek out a certain Fu Yongnian at the South Ward Warden's Office in Beijing and instruct him to come to Gansu, bringing Fu's plumed hat and yellow riding jacket[13] and meeting him at the Great Buddha monastery in Liangzhou's Manchu city.[14] It was thrilling stuff, like a scene from *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* or *Water Margin*. Xia repeated the performance a few days later, bilking a mule driver and sending him off to the capital with another letter.

The state and the framers of its code were correct, of course, about fraud's potential for harm, because forgery and imposture as the state defined them were quintessentially political acts involving the manipulation of official symbols and identities. Viewing the crimes from below, however, the state was merely an obstacle to, or unwitting accomplice in, the fraud's acquisition of resources. This is not to argue that our frauds, even the pettiest among them, were unaware of the political nature of their crimes. They were, after all, attempting to exercise official authority, and their schemes were only successful when their intended victims acquiesced. Even when the objective was simply material gain, the protagonists were manipulating political power to achieve it.

While the state focused on monopolizing authority, the fraud's eyes were on the prizes of money, food, lodging, and status, with official authority as a tool for acquiring them. In fact, from the practitioners' perspective fraud in the state's juridical sense was but one path among many. There were other ways to swindle without assuming an official facade. It is noteworthy, for example, that the late Ming period saw the publication of a popular manual on how to avoid being victimized by con artists. *A New Book on Stopping Fraud* (Dupian xinshu) detailed myriad fraud strategies ranging from shell games with false silver to phony brokerage scams, deceits using women, fraud on boats, and

fraud using poetry and magic.[15] The state, however, was largely absent from its pages, and with the exception of coin counterfeiting there were no references to forgery or impersonation of the kind enshrined in the Zhawei sections of the dynastic codes.

This absence suggests a contrast between dynastic and popular views of what kinds of fraud mattered, the one centered on those who dared to flout the state's monopoly over official authority and the other reflecting a perception that the streets and marketplaces were infested with swindlers poised to make off with good people's hard-earned wealth. The latter view was probably more representative of the late imperial landscape than the former, and the partial statutory depoliticization of Zhawei offenses in the Middle Qing suggests that officials, too, were aware of the broader context surrounding and inspiring fraud. Forgers and impostors reflected weaknesses and inconsistencies in the ruling structure, but they also reflected the general commercialization and social mobility of late imperial society. Eighteenth-century crime, legislation, and official behavior reveal a state subtly adjusting its philosophical line, which defined the parameters of political status and authority, to the pressures of an increasingly mobile and economically driven society. Emperors and their jurists were prepared to yield some ground in political theory, and local officials were already doing so in practice.

APPENDIX
ARCHIVAL CASE RECORDS

CASE	SOURCE(S)	CHAPTER(S)
1	NGDK 60435 (SZ 2.12, no day)	5
2	*Neige tiben* 2193-17 (n.d., [SZ 1–SZ 5.4.15])	5
3	NGDK 39661 (SZ 16.12.28)	3
4	*Neige tiben, juan* 33, no. 2243 19 (KX [33 34])	5, 6
5	*KXMW*, pp. 1030–31, no. 2625 (KX 54.6.16)	4
6	*KXHW*, 7: 559–61 (KX 55.12.6)	1
7	*KXMW*, p. 1597, no. 3953 (n.d., KX 53–KX 61.8.14)	4
8	*YZHW*, 1: 29–30 (YZ 1.1.29)	2
9	*GZDYZ*, 2: 922–23 (YZ 2.7.26)	5
10	*GZDYZ*, 3: 38 (YZ 2.8.8), 171–72 (YZ 2.9.11)	2
11	*GZDYZ*, 3: 223 (YZ 2.9.21)	5
12	*GZDYZ*, 3: 384–85 (YZ 2.10.28)	2
13	*GZDYZ*, 4: 52 (YZ 3.3.16)	4, 5
14	NGXF 2322-9 (YZ 3.4.16)	4
15	NGXF 2324-1 (YZ 3.4.19)	5, 6
16	NGXF 2329-3 (YZ 3.12.20)	6
17	*YZHW*, 6: 740–42 (YZ 4.1.29)	2
18	*GZDYZ*, 6: 316–17 (YZ 4.7.19)	5
19	*YZHW*, 33: 1022–39 (YZ 4?)	5
20	*GZDYZ*, 7: 195–96 (YZ 4.12.25), 373–74 (YZ 5.1.25), 378–79 (YZ 5.1.25), 507–8 (YZ 5.2.17)	2, 5
21	*Yongzheng qijuzhu ce* 3: 2046–47 (YZ 6.6.9)	3
22	*GZDYZ*, 11: 216–17, 217–18 (both YZ 6.8, no day)	2
23	*GZDYZ*, 11: 429–30 (YZ 6.9.27)	2

24	*GZDYZ*, 13: 258–60 (YZ 7.5.22); *YZHW*, 15: 461–62 (YZ 7.6.4), 829 (YZ 7.7.22)	2
25	*GZDYZ*, 13: 846–47 (YZ 7.r7.11)	2
26	*GZDYZ*, 14: 341–42 (YZ 7.9.8), 671–73 (YZ 7.10.6), 680–81 (YZ 7.10.10)	2
27	*GZDYZ*, 14: 890–91 (YZ 7.11.10)	2, 3
28	*GZDYZ*, 15: 265–66 (YZ 7.12.9), 324–25 (YZ 7.12.15), 16: 412 (YZ 8.5.11)	2, 5
29	Neige tiben, tanwu, 2285-2 (YZ 7.12.22)	5
30	*YZHW*, 17: 664 (YZ 8.1.10), 32: 536 (n.d.)	5
31	NGXF 2341-6 (YZ 8.2.21), 2386-10 (YZ 8, no month or day)	5, 6
32	*GZDYZ*, 16: 231–32 (YZ 8.4.15)	2
33	*GZDYZ*, 17: 178–79 (YZ 8.11.15); NGXF 2343-11 (YZ 9.12.14)	2, 3
34	NGXF 2385-18 (YZ 8, no month or day)	4
35	*YZHW*, 19: 845–46 (YZ 9.1.21)	4

36	NGXF 2354-7 (YZ 11.10.13)	5
37	*GZDYZ*, 22: 363–63 (YZ 11.11.21); *YZHW*, 25: 602–3 (YZ 11.12.12); *GZDYZ*, 22: 450–51 (YZ 11.12.19)	3, 5
38	*YZHW*, 25: 604–5 (YZ 11.12.12); *GZDYZ*, 22: 437–38 (YZ 11.12.12), 444–46 (YZ 11.12.16)	2, 5
39	*GZDYZ*, 22: 809–10 (YZ 12.4.13), 834 (YZ 12.4.18).	2
40	*YZHW*, 26: 749–50 (YZ 12.7.25)	2
41	*GZDYZ*, 24: 791–93 (YZ 13.6.8)	2, 5
42	XKQT, QL 1.3.17 (*juan* 302, *yiban*)	2, 5
43	XKQT, QL 1.4.6 (*juan* 320)	5
44	XKQT, QL 1.7.19 (*juan* 307)	3, 5
45	XKQT, QL 1.7.29 (*juan* 307)	5
46	XKQT, QL 1.8.6 (*juan* 315)	5
47	XKQT, QL 1.8.28 (*juan* 321)	5
48	XKWJ, QL 1.9.4 (*juan* 9776)	5, 6
49	XKQT, QL 1.9.4 (*juan* 318); XKWJ, QL 1, no month or day (*juan* 9973)	5, 6

50	XKQT, QL 1.9.4 (*juan* 303, *yiban*)	5
51	XKQT, QL 1.9.6 (*juan* 293)	5
52	XKWJ, QL 1.11.11 (*juan* 9770)	5
53	XKQT, QL 1.11.11 (*juan* 295)	4, 5
54	NGXF 2379-7 (QL 1, no month or day)	5
55	ZPZZ, QL 2.1.11	4
56	LFZZ 1373-032 (QL 4.5.8), 1373-033 (QL 4.5.30)	5
57	XKTZ 13597-001 (QL 5.5.11)	5, 6
58	XKWJ, QL 5.11.1 (*juan* 9795)	5
59	XKWJ, QL 5.12.21 (*juan* 9793)	5
60	LFZZ 1376-023 (QL 6.9.15)	5
61	Yunlu et al., QL 6.9.25 (in Lü Xiaoxian, "Qianlong liunian); NGDK 22130 (QL 7.11.11)	2, 5
62	LFZZ 1380-030 (QL 9.7.9), case 1	5
63	LFZZ 1380-030 (QL 9.7.9), case 2	5

64	LFZZ 1380-030 (QL 9.7.9), case 3	5
65	LFZZ 1380-030 (QL 9.7.9), case 4	5
66	LFZZ 1380-030 (QL 9.7.9), case 5	5
67	LFZZ 1380-030 (QL 9.7.9), case 7	5
68	LFZZ 1380-030 (QL 9.7.9), case 8	5
69	LFZZ 1380-030 (QL 9.7.9), case 9	5
70	LFZZ 1380-030 (QL 9.7.9), case 10	5
71	XKQT, QL 10.12.13 (*juan* 231)	5
72	JJD 1710 (QL 12.12.13), 1813 (QL 12.13.1.9)	5
73	JJD 2180 (QL 13.3.19), 2512 (QL 13.5.29)	5
74	JJD 2525 (QL 13.6.25 rescript), 3400 (QL 13.10.9)	5
75	JJD 2709 (QL 13.6.29)	5
76	JJD 2778 (QL 13.*r*7.12); 2808 (QL 13.*r*7.20); 3442 (QL 13.9.28)	2
77	XKWJ 08854-020 (QL 14.2.30)	5

78	XKWJ 14107-003 (QL 14.3.9)	5
79	NGDK 054321 (QL 15.11.5)	4
80	NGDK 54859 (QL 15.12.17)	4
81	JJD 6377 (QL 16.1.23 rescript)	5, 6
82	ZPZZ 0206-024 (QL 16.5.10)	3
83	XKTZ 14115-003 (QL 16.6.13)	5
84	XKWJ 14119-02 (QL 17.2.28)	5
85	JJD 8840 (QL 17.7.19 rescript)	5
86	NGDK 2550 (QL 17.9.17)	5
87	*GZDQL*, 4: 198–99 (QL 17.10.29)	4, 5
88	LFZZ 1250-005 (QL 17.12.25), 006 (QL 18.1.6), 004 (QL 18.1.10), 007 (QL 18.1.26)	5
89	LFZZ 1383-002 (QL 18.1.19)	5
90	LFZZ, QL 18.12.21 (reel 95, frames 2924–27)	5
91	LFZZ 1385-026 (QL 19.4.18); XKWJ (QL 19.4.19), *juan* 9865	5

92	LFZZ 1386-20 (QL 20.4.10)	5
93	XKWJ, QL 20.5.11 (*juan* 9875)	5
94	LFZZ 1386-033 (QL 20.6.22)	5
95	XKWJ, QL 21.9.15 (*juan* 9874)	5
96	LFZZ 1388-011 (QL 22.6.13)	4
97	LFZZ 1388-015 (QL 22.7.13), 1388-032 (QL 23.3.15)	5
98	ZPZZ (QL 23.4.6)	4, 5
99	ZPZZ 0226-010 (QL 23.9.6); ZPZZ 28-0002-013 (QL 23.11.6)	3
100	ZPZZ 28-0002-012 (QL 23.11.29)	4
101	LFZZ 1350-001 (QL 24.1.29)	5
102	NGDK 47085 (QL 24.9.9)	5
103	ZPZZ 0236-031 (QL 24.10.9)	3, 5
104	LFZZ 1390-057 (QL 25.5.11), 101-089 (QL 25.6.28)	3, 5
105	LFZZ 1391-005 (QL 26.5.28)	4, 5

106	LFZZ 1391-013 (QL 26.9.25); ZPZZ 0251-017 (QL 26.11.23)	4, 5
107	LFZZ 1391-038 (QL 27.4.28)	5
108	JJD 9907 (QL 27.5.15), LFZZ 1391-043 (QL 27.6.24), NGDK 078282 (QL 27.7.7), LFZZ 1295-039 (QL 27.9.26)	5
109	JJD 10012 (QL 27.10.22)	5
110	*GZDQL*, 17: 243–46 (QL 28.3.19), 566–70 (QL 28.4.27)	3, 5
111	XKTZ 05945-007 (QL 28.6.7)	5
112	*GZDQL*, 18: 484–85 (QL 28.7.14), 19: 458–50 (QL 28.11.10)	3
113	*GZDQL*, 18: 573 (QL 28.7.27), 742–43 (QL 28.7.27); 19: 657–60 (QL 28.11.21); LFZZ 1394-005 (QL 28, no month or day)	3
114	*GZDQL*, 21: 368–71 (QL 29.5.2); NGDK 78910 (QL 29.6, no day)	3, 5
115	*GZDQL*, 23: 330–31 (QL 29.11.28), 62: 414–15 (QL 29.12.7)	5
116	*GZDQL*, 23: 738–40 (QL 30.1.22), 24: 617–21 (QL 30.4.16)	2
117	LFZZ 1397-013 (QL 30.3, no day)	2, 3, 5

118	*GZDQL*, 24: 648 (QL 30.4.21)	5
119	*GZDQL*, 25: 14–17 (QL 30.5.18)	5
120	XKQT, QL 30.9.19 (*juan* 345)	5, 6
121	LFZZ 1399-017 (QL 31.4.1)	4, 5
122	LFZZ 1400-006 (QL 31.5.18)	5
123	XKWJ, QL 31.12.4 (*juan* 9923)	4, 5
124	LFZZ 1253-050 (QL 31.12.6); 1401-001 (QL 32.1.10)	3
125	LFZZ 1401-003 (QL 32.[1].20)	5
126	*GZDQL*, 27: 679–80 (QL 32.*r*7.26); LFZZ 1401-056 (QL 32.11.3)	3, 5
127	LFZZ 1406-22 (QL 33.6.3)	5
128	LFZZ 1407-027 (QL 34.3, no day), 1407-042 (QL 34.5, no day)	5
129	XKTZ 06492-006 (QL 34.6.1)	4
130	JJD 10639 (QL 34.9.8)	5

131	LFZZ 1408-007 (QL 35.2.29 rescript), ZPZZ 0294-043 (QL 35.12.14)	3
132	XKWJ, QL 35.3.12 (*juan* 9955)	5
133	JJD 11869 (QL 35.4.16 [not 35.4.10])	3, 5
134	JJD 12425 (QL 35.6.30), 12126 (QL 35.7.5)	5
135	JJD 12274 (QL 35.7.2); NGDK 081477 (QL 36.2.4)	4, 5
136	JJD 12667 (QL 35.10.12)	3
137	JJD 17059 (QL 36.1.23)	5
138	JJD 14190 (QL 36.5.20); ZPZZ, *falü*, *qita*, QL 36.5.27 (*juan* 56, *bao* 19)	4, 5
139	XKTZ 06653-005 (QL 36.10.29)	4
140	ZPZZ 0305-047 (QL 36.12.7); ZPZZ 0318-003 (QL 37.2.18)	3
141	XKTZ 13997-007 and LFZZ 1409-035 (both dated QL 38.5.26)	5
142	ZPZZ 0332-008 (QL 39.12.22); LFZZ 1416-009 (QL 40.1.21)	3
143	Xingke tiben, QL 40, *juan* 339 (*fa*), QL 40.1.22	5

144	XKQT, QL 40.2.13 (*juan* 340)	4, 5
145	XKWJ, QL 40.2.28 (*juan* 9973)	5
146	XKWJ, QL 40.3.5 (*juan* 9977)	5
147	XKWJ, QL 40.[4.21] (*juan* 9979, *huiti*, case 1)	4
148	XKWJ, QL 40.[4.21] (*juan* 9979, *huiti*, case 2)	4, 5
149	XKWJ, QL 40.[4.21] (*juan* 9979, *huiti*, case 3)	4, 5
150	XKWJ, QL 40.[4.21] (*juan* 9979, *huiti*, case 4)	5
151	XKWJ, QL 40.[4.21] (*juan* 9979, *huiti*, case 6)	4
152	XKWJ, QL 40.[4.21] (*juan* 9979, *huiti*, case 7)	5
153	XKWJ, QL 40.[4.21] (*juan* 9979, *huiti*, case 8)	4
154	XKWJ, QL 40.[4.21] (*juan* 9979, *huiti*, case 9)	5
155	XKWJ, QL 40.[4.21] (*juan* 9979, *huiti*, case 12)	5
156	XKWJ, QL 40.[4.21] (*juan* 9979, *huiti*, case 13)	4, 5
157	XKWJ, QL 40.[4.21] (*juan* 9979, *huiti*, case 14)	4

158	XKWJ, QL 40.[4.21] (*juan* 9979, *huiti*, case 15)	4, 5
159	XKWJ, QL 40.[4.21] (*juan* 9979, *huiti*, case 16)	4, 5
160	XKWJ, QL 40.[4.21] (*juan* 9979, *huiti*, case 17)	5
161	XKWJ, QL 40.[4.21] (*juan* 9979, *huiti*, case 18)	5
162	JJD 37582 (QL 40.9.9), 37634 (QL 40.9.29)	3, 5
163	LFZZ 1419-003 (QL 40.11, no day)	5
164	LFZZ 1417-003 (QL 40, no month or day; actually QL 36)	5
165	LFZZ 1421-006 (QL 41.5.15)	3
166	*Qingdai Baxian Qianlong*, SF 6-1-1256 (*quanzong* 173, reel 7, QL 41.9.30)	5
167	LFZZ 1422-025 (QL 41.11.11)	3
168	XKTZ 14007-017 ([QL 42])	4, 5
169	JJD 20258 (QL 43.*r*6.17)	5
170	JJD 25339 (QL 44.11.11), 25461 (QL 44.11.19), 27629 (QL 45.7.13 rescript)	5, 6
171	JJD 26019 (QL 44.12.22)	3

172	XKQT, QL 45.2.29 (*juan* 269)	4
173	JJD 27359 (QL 45.5.13)	5
174	JJD 27128 (QL 45.5.20 rescript)	5
175	JJD 28212 (QL 45.9.7), 28453 (QL 45.9.30)	3
176	Zhaolian, *Xiaoting zalu*, 177–78 (*juan* 6); *Qingshi gao*, 3: 2343 (*juan* 220, p. 9077)	2
177	LFZZ 0637-053 (QL 46.7.3), 0637-059 (QL 47.9.7 rescript); Gongzhongdang zadang 409000415 ([QL 47.9.7 rescript])	5, 6
178	JJD 32152 (QL 46.9.17)	5
179	LFZZ 0170-068 (QL 46.10.20)	3
180	*GZDQL*, 55: 234–35 (QL 48.2.25)	4, 5
181	*Qianlongchao shangyudang*, 11: 700, no. 1795 (QL 48.6.5), 11:763, no. 2004 (QL 48.7.29)	3
182	*GDZQL*, 57: 159-62 (QL 48.8.18)	5, 6
183	XKTZ 14016-013 ([QL 48])	4
184	LFZZ 1429-024 (QL 49.10.9), 1429-026 (QL 49.10.12)	5

185	LFZZ, reel 98, frames 1722–23, 1769–1771, and 1772–75 (QL 51.12.12); LFZZ 1211-040 (QL 56.10.1)	2
186	*GZDQL*, 63: 715–19 (QL 52.3.23)	5, 6
187	Xingbu dang, Yunnan si, 21289 (QL 52.4.19)	5
188	*GZDQL*, 68: 237–39 (QL 53.5.10)	5, 6
189	*GZDQL*, 74: 109–11 (QL 54.11.12); JJD 43657 (QL 55.2.20)	4, 5
190	JJD 43697 (QL 55.2.9)	4, 5
191	JJD 44705 (QL 55.6.8)	5
192	JJD 45616 (QL 55.9.2)	4, 5
193	JJD 45338 (QL 55.9.5), 45528 (QL 55.9.27)	3
194	JJD 45768 (QL 55.10.20 rescript)	4, 5
195	JJD 46518 (QL 55.12.17 rescript)	5
196	LFZZ 1442-18 (QL 56.9.10)	5
197	LFZZ, reel 98, frames 2547–51 (QL 56.11, no day)	5
198	LFZZ, reel 98, frames 2870–93 (QL 58.3, no day)	5

199	LFZZ 1445-017 (QL 58.9.12)	3, 5
200	LFZZ 1447-027 (QL 59.11.21 rescript)	5
201	XKWJ, QL 60.*r*2.20 (*juan* 10021)	5, 6
202	LFZZ 1448-015 (QL 60.12.5)	5
203	XKQT, JQ 1.4.21 (*juan* 214)	5
204	XKQT, JQ 1.8.19 (*juan* 214)	5, 6
205	GZDJQ, 4: 130–31 (JQ 1.11.5)	5
206	XKQT, JQ 2.[4.14?] (*juan* 232)	5
207	XKQT, JQ 2.5.21 (*juan* 229, *yiban*)	5
208	XKQT, JQ 3.1.28 (*juan* 187)	4
209	XKQT, JQ 3.4.7 (*juan* 187, *huiti*, case 1)	5
210	XKQT, JQ 3.4.7 (*juan* 187, *huiti*, case 2)	5
211	XKQT, JQ 3.4.7 (*juan* 187, *huiti*, case 3)	4
212	XKQT, JQ 5.*r*4.10 (*juan* 226)	3, 5
213	XKQT, JQ 5.12.11 (*juan* 227)	4

214	GZDJQ, 14: 709–10 (JQ 6.8.13)	3
215	GZDJQ, 14: 13–15 (JQ 6.8.26)	5
216	GZDJQ, 18: 354–55 (JQ 7.2.1), 19: 542–43 (JQ 7.4.16)	3
217	GZDJQ, 18: 709–13 (JQ 7.2.25)	3
218	GZDJQ, 19: 28 (JQ 7.3.11); LFZZ 2433-22 (JQ 8.4.29)	5
219	XKWJ, JQ 7.10.29 (*juan* 10028)	5
220	XKQT, JQ 8.r2.20 (*juan* 137, *huiti*, case 1)	5
221	XKQT, JQ 8.r2.20 (*juan* 137, *huiti*, case 4)	5
222	XKQT, JQ 8.6.12 (*juan* 140)	4
223	XKQT, JQ 8.11.29 (*juan* 140); XKTZ 09070-019 (JQ 9.5.20)	4
224	XKQT, JQ 11.3.10 (*juan* 216)	5
225	XKQT, JQ 11.3.16 (*juan* 216, *huiti*, case 3)	5
226	XKQT, JQ 11.3.16 (*juan* 216, *huiti*, case 4)	5
227	XKQT, JQ 11.3.28 (*juan* 216, *huiti*, case 1)	5
228	XKQT, JQ 11.3.28 (*juan* 216, *huiti*, case 2)	5
229	LFZZ 2442-044 (JQ 11.4.24)	3
230	ZPZZ 0500-014 (JQ 11.9.23); LFZZ 2444-007 ([JQ 11.7.17])	3
231	XKQT, JQ 11.12.10 (*juan* 217)	4
232	Xingbu dang, Jiangsu si, 07057 (JQ 13.6.10)	4
233	XKWJ, JQ 13.7.10 (*juan* 10037)	4

234	GZDJQ, 33: 371–73 (JQ 13.12.14)	5, 6
235	ZPZZ, JQ 16.5.20; LFZZ, JQ 16.6.8	4
236	GZDJQ, 43: 236–39 (JQ 19.11.20)	5
237	GZDJQ, 47: 840–43 (JQ 20.5.8)	5
238	GZDJQ, 49: 258–60 (JQ 20.7.17)	6
239	XKWJ, JQ 21.3.14 (*juan* 10057)	5
240	XKWJ, JQ 21.3.22 (*juan* 10057)	5
241	JJD 49230 (JQ 2[1?].9.22 rescript)	5
242	JJD 50007 (JQ 21.12.13)	4
243	JJD 52103 (JQ 22.6.15)	5
244	XKWJ, JQ 23.3.20 (*juan* 10061, *huiti*, case 1)	3
245	XKWJ, JQ 23.3.20 (*juan* 10061, *huiti*, case 2)	5
246	XKWJ, JQ 23.3.20 (*juan* 10061, *huiti*, case 4)	3, 5
247	XKWJ, JQ 23.3.20 (*juan* 10061, *huiti*, case 5)	5
248	XKWJ, JQ 23.3.20 (*juan* 10061, *huiti*, case 7)	5
249	XKTZ 10105-016 (JQ 24.*r*4.2)	4
250	XKQT, DG 1.6.6 (*juan* 275, *yiban*)	3, 5
251	LFZZ, DG 3.11.2, DG 3.11.30	4
252	LFZZ 4029-027 (DG 4.*r*7.15)	4
253	Xingbu dang, Zhili si, 00330 (DG 7.5.2)	3
254	JJD 57252 (DG 7.10.23)	4
255	LFZZ, DG 12.12.13; NGDK 168394-001 (DG 12.12.29)	4

256	JJD 069320 (DG 14.9.12)	4, 5
257	XKTZ 11169-022 (DG 15.7.4)	4
258	XKWJ 14383-012 (DG 15.9.4)	4
259	"Gongzhongdang Daoguangchao zouzhe," 4: 440–43 (DG 18.1.19)	4
260	"Gongzhongdang Daoguangchao zouzhe," 4: 539–47 (DG 18.2.1)	5, 6
261	XKTZ 11391-006 (DG 19.2.6)	4
262	XKTZ 11385-009 (DG 19.5.8)	5
263	XKWJ 14387-013 (DG 19.10.30)	5
264	XKTZ 11456-007 (DG 20.8.8)	4
265	XKTZ 11617-024 (DG 22.9.25)	4
266	LFZZ 3830-023 (DG 29.3.21)	3

DLCY Dulicunyi *chongkanben*

ECCP Hummel, Arthur W., ed. *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*

GZDJQ "Gongzhongdang Jiaqingchao zouzhe"

GZDQL *Gongzhongdang Qianlongchao zouzhe*

GZDYZ *Gongzhongdang Yongzhengchao zouzhe*

HDSL *Huidian shili*

JJD Junjidang zouzhe lufu

KXHW *Kangxichao Hanwen zhupi zouzhe huibian*

KXMW *Kangxichao Manwen zhupi zouzhe quanyi*

KXQZ *Kangxi qiju zhu*

LFZJ Lifanyuan chu lufu zouzhe

LLTK Da Qing lüli tongkao *jiaozhu*

NGDK Neige daku dang'an

NGXF Neige tiben, xingfa

QSL *Qing shilu*

XKQT Xingke tiben, qita lei

XKTZ Xingke tiben: tudi zhaiwu, tanwu, weijin

XKWJ Xingke tiben, weijin lei

YZHW *Yongzhengchao Hanwen zhupi zouzhe huibian*

ZPZZ Zhupi zouzhe

NOTES

NOTE ON TERMS AND CONVENTIONS

1Intercalary month: an extra month periodically inserted in the traditional calendar to reconcile the twelve lunar months with the solar year. Wilkinson, *Chinese History: A Manual*, 171, 179; Xue Zhongsan and Ouyang Yi, *Liangqian nian Zhong-Xili duizhao biao*, 347.

2Zhang Yan, *Qingdai jingji jianshi*, 315–16, 325–26; Myers and Wang, "Economic Developments," 626–30.

INTRODUCTION

1*Xing'an huilan*, 51:16a-b. Subsequent research uncovered the original memorials on the case, in *GZDQL*, 23: 330–31 (QL 29.11.28) and 414–15 (QL 29.12.07).

2This would have been Yongqi (1741–66), invested as Imperial Prince Rong (Rong Qinwang) in 1765. *Qing huangshi sipu*, 3:23a-b; *ECCP*, 1: 386. Actually, Xiong had been misinformed. It was not Yongqi's procession.

3*GZDQL*, 23: 331.

4Xiong referred to one Xiong Yulong of the Hanlin Academy. No such person appears in the main biographical sources. Xiong Yulong may have been a low-ranking official, or perhaps Xiong Shixian invented him altogether. The Hanlin Academy was a prestigious scholarly establishment engaged in imperially sponsored literary and historical projects and the drafting of important ceremonial documents. (See chapter 6.)

5The assizes were annual proceedings in the capital at which the emperor, assisted by high judicial officials, made his final determinations on the year's "delayed" (as opposed to "immediate") death sentences. Each of the condemned was cleared for execution, put on a deferred list for reconsideration the following year, or had his or her sentence commuted. Bodde and Morris, *Law in Imperial China*, 134–43.

6Dai Yanhui, "Lun Tanglü Zhawei lü"; Wallace Johnson, trans., *T'ang Code*, 2: 419–55.

7Jones, trans., *Great Qing Code*, 339-46; Jiang, trans., *Great Ming Code*, 208–13.

8Bodde and Morris, *Law in Imperial China*, 425–27.

9Earlier studies include Ch'ü, *Law and Society in Traditional China*; van der Sprenkel, *Legal Institutions in Manchu China*; and Bodde and Morris, *Law in Imperial China*.

10See, for example, Macauley, *Social Power and Legal Culture*; Buoye, *Manslaughter, Markets, and Moral Economy*; Sommer, *Sex, Law, and Society*; Antony, *Like Froth Floating on the Sea*; and Theiss, *Disgraceful Matters*.

11Bartlett, "Ch'ing Palace Memorials," 2–3; Park and Antony,

"Archival Research in Qing Legal History," 95.

12Bartlett, "Ch'ing Palace Memorials," 3–9.

13County magistrates and prefects were not entitled to dispatch communications to the throne; they submitted them to their provincial superiors.

14For articles covering (and exemplifying) much of this history, see *Ming Qing dang'an lunwen xuanbian*, 1–524.

15I cite archival records as follows: For documents at the National Palace Museum and the Institute of History and Philology, I cite the collection title and document number, followed by date of submission. Grand Council file copies at the First Archive are also cited by document number and date. In the First Archive's routine and palace memorial collections, twentieth-century archivists sorted each year's memorials into topical subcategories and physically grouped them, without individual document numbers, in numbered bundles (*juan* or *bao*). I cite each memorial by subcollection title, submission date, and bundle number. For those given unique document numbers in the archive's recent digitization project, I cite the document number and date. Memorials in published collections are cited by volume and page numbers, followed by the date.

16Conner, "True Confessions? Chinese Confessions Then and Now," 134–44; Park, "Imperial Chinese Justice and the Law of Torture," 46, 47–48.

17Ch'ü, *Local Government*, 121–24.

18The damage could be widespread in a case with major political connotations. Philip Kuhn has described the personal tragedies and travesties of justice that resulted from the soul-stealing scare of 1768, when innocent men confessed to practicing sorcery because they could not withstand the torture to which local officials subjected them. Kuhn, *Soulstealers*, 175–77.

19Park, "Imperial Chinese Justice and the Law of Torture," 53–55.

20Ibid., 47–49. For administrative sanctions and criminal penalties governing "wrong judgments," see Ch'ü, *Local Government*, 128–29.

21Conner, "True Confessions? Chinese Confessions Then and Now," 144–45.

22Buoye, "Suddenly Murderous Intent Arose," 67; Karasawa, "From Oral Testimony to Written Records," 103–4, 116.

23For this sense of the "fictional" in crime narratives, see Davis, *Fiction in the Archives*, 3–4. See also the important discussion in Karasawa, "From Oral Testimony to Written Records," 117–18.

24Karasawa, "From Oral Testimony to Written Records"; Paderni, "I Thought I Would Have Some Happy Days"; Buoye, "Suddenly

Murderous Intent Arose"; Hegel and Carlitz, eds., *Writing and Law in Late Imperial China*.

1. MENG GUANGZU: THE PRINCE'S TOUR AND THE STRUGGLE FOR THE THRONE

1Yinzhi (1677–1732) was the third son of the Kangxi emperor, who invested him as Imperial Prince Cheng (Cheng Qinwang) in 1709. *ECCP*, 2: 922.

2*KXHW*, 7: 559–61 (KX 55.12.6), Zhao Hongxie.

3It was Qing practice to keep the imperial sons in the capital. Investiture brought title and a household establishment in Beijing, but not territory in the provinces. Princes were not permitted to go more than twenty miles (60 *li*) beyond the capital without good cause. Guo et al., *Qingchao dianzhi*, 25–26. The *li* or Chinese mile was roughly equivalent to one third of an English mile.

4*KXHW*, 7: 559–61 (KX 55.12.6); *KXMW*, p. 1174, no. 2962 (KX 56.2.9).

5*KXMW*, p. 1174, no. 2962 (KX 56.2.9); *QSL*, 6: 660 (*Shengzu shilu, juan* 271), KX 56.2.12, *dingyou* day; *KXHW*, 7: 828–29 (KX 56.4.16). Bannerman: The banners were combined military and social administrative units, created during the early years of the Manchu conquest to subsume the traditionally loose tribal organizations. Beginning with four Manchu banners named after their flag colors, the system was expanded in the 1630s to twenty-four, with eight each for the Manchus and the Mongols and Chinese who had submitted to them. Later, as the backbone of the Qing military establishment, the banners were distributed in garrisons at strategic locations throughout the empire, with the heaviest concentration in and around the capital. Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, no. 611; Elliott, *The Manchu Way*, 56–63, 72–77, and chapter 2.

6*QSL*, 6: 670B (*Shengzu shilu, juan* 272), KX 56.4.19, *guimao*. "Death by slicing" (*lingchi*), the harshest form of capital punishment in the code, was reserved for "the very worst political and moral offenses," including many of the Ten Abominations (Shi E), odious crimes such as treason, rebellion, and parricide. Brook, Bourgon, and Blue, *Death by a Thousand Cuts*, 53–61; Bodde and Morris, *Law in Imperial China*, 93–95. Meng Guangzu's sentence was ultimately commuted to decapitation. *QSL*, 6: 741 (*Shengzu shilu, juan* 280), KX 57.8.7, *guiwei*.

7Kessler, *K'ang-hsi and the Consolidation of Ch'ing Rule*; Oxnam, *Ruling From Horseback*; Spence, "The K'ang-hsi Reign," 127–60.

8See Silas Wu, *Communication and Imperial Control*, chapters 5 and 6.

9The struggle for the throne was complex, involving shifting alliances and changes of fortune. For short biographies of the princes involved, see *ECCP*, 2: 915–20, 922–31. For lengthier studies, see

Pei Huang, *Autocracy at Work*, 60–80; Silas Wu, *Passage to Power*, part 4; and Feng, *Yongzheng zhuan*, chapter 1.

10Pei Huang, *Autocracy at Work*, 71–75; Silas Wu, *Passage to Power*, 165–67.

11Pei Huang, *Autocracy at Work*, 60–80; Silas Wu, *Passage to Power*, chapters 11 and 14.

12Pei Huang, *Autocracy at Work*, 68.

13Silas Wu, *Passage to Power*, 174; Pei Huang, *Autocracy at Work*, 78.

14Silas Wu notes that princes often tapped their retainers in the provinces for financial support. *Passage to Power*, 169–70.

15Pei Huang, *Autocracy at Work*, 75, 326n87.

16Silas Wu, *Passage to Power*, 166, 182. Wu mistakenly indicated that Meng posed as the prince himself, rather than as his agent.

17Feng, *Yongzheng zhuan*, 33–34.

18*KXQJZ*, 3: 2365–66.

19Feng Erkang interprets the last line ("Ruo you cishi, jidang yi shenming bao zhi") as a direct admonition to Wei Tingzhen and evidence that, for the sake of Yinzhi's reputation, the emperor did not wish to pursue the question of his role in Meng's adventure (Feng, *Yongzheng zhuan*, 43–44). Wei does not appear to have been present, however (the emperor referred to him in the third person), and the questions preceding this statement suggest that the monarch was trying to get to the bottom of the matter rather than turning a blind eye to his son's activities.

20For the range of high-level capital and provincial officials who could be called "great man" (*daren*) in the early Qing, see *Qingdai dianzhang zhidu cidian*, 27. Yinxiang, Imperial Prince Yi (1686–1730), was the Kangxi emperor's thirteenth son. *ECCP*, 2: 923–24; *Qingshi gao*, 3: 2343 (*juan* 220, pp. 9077-79).

21*GZDYZ*, 7: 195–96 (YZ 4.12.25), 373–74 (YZ 5.1.25), 378–79 (YZ 5.1.25), and 507–8 (YZ 5.2.17).

22For the list of crimes, see *QSL*, 8: 264–66 (*Shizong shilu, juan* 94).

23See Pei Huang, *Autocracy at Work*, 71–75; and Silas Wu, *Passage to Power*, 165–67. Both cite Xiao, *Yongxian lu*, 83 (*juan* 2, *shang*, on Chen Menglei). Although scholarly connections enhanced his image, Yinzhi failed to secure the military backing that proved critical to Yinzhen's success.

24*KXQJZ*, 3: 2385 (KX 56.4.19).

25*KXQJZ*, 3: 2387 (KX 56.4.22).

26*QSL*, 6: 653 (*Shengzu shilu, juan* 270), KX 55.12.16, *renyin*; and *KXHW*, 7: 576–78 (same date). Of course, it would have been impolitic for Zhao to suggest otherwise.

27Prince Xin: Xin Junwang, prince of the second degree. The anecdote probably refers to Eje or Dejoo, who held the title from 1661 to

1702 and 1706 to 1762, respectively. *Qingshi gao*, 3: 2332–33 (*juan* 218, pp. 9037–39).

28*KXQJZ*, 3: 2386–2387 (KX 56.4.22).

29*QSL*, 6: 670–71 (*Shengzu shilu, juan* 272), KX 56.4.22, *bingwu*; *KXQJZ*, 3: 2386–87. The prince in question was Yinreng, the former heir apparent.

30*KXQJZ*, 3: 2385 (KX 56.4.19). Yu Laifeng was a bannerman assigned to the Imperial Falcon Cage. For his case, see *KXHW*, 7: 532–35 (KX 55.11.22), 680–89 (KX 56.2.12), and 911 (KX 56.5.18).

31*Age:* "unofficial reference to the son of an emperor or of an Imperial Prince [*qinwang*], especially used before his formal enfoeffment." Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, no. 2.

32*KXQJZ*, 3: 2385 (KX 56.4.19). The edict was formally promulgated three weeks later, on June 15, 1717. See *QSL*, 6: 672 (*Shengzu shilu, juan* 272), KX 56.5.7, *gengshen*.

33*KXQJZ*, 3: 2385 (KX 56.4.19); *QSL*, 6: 670B (*Shengzu shilu, juan* 272), KX 56.4.19, *guimao*.

34*KXQJZ*, 3: 2464 (KX 56.11.26).

35*KXQJZ*, 3: 2385 (KX 56.4.19). For Tong's name I follow convention in romanizing the third character as *rang*, but the correct pronunciation may have been the variant *xiang* ("to assist"), which would have evenly matched his brother's name, Tong Guozuo (*zuo* as in "to assist"). *Baqi tongzhi*, 1: 284 (*juan* 16); *Hanyu da cidian*, 2: 829.

36*KXMW*, p. 1174, no. 2962 (KX 56.2.9).

37*KXHW*, 7: 922–23 (KX 56.5.20).

38*QSL*, 6: 675 (*Shengzu shilu, juan* 273), KX 56.7.9, *xinyou*.

39Silas Wu, *Passage to Power*, 166. In a letter to Nian, the future emperor excoriated him for his disloyalty to the emperor and obliquely threatened to expose him—but it appears that he did not carry out the threat. See "Yong qinwang zhi Nian Gengyao shu"; and the analysis in Wang Guangyue, "'Yong qinwang yu' kaoyi," 96, 97, 99.

40On the very day on which the emperor first criticized Nian for failing to arrest Meng Guangzu, he also praised him for provisioning troops in the far west: "Nian Gengyao in preparing military matters is effective and diligent; extremely commendable." *KXQJZ*, 3: 2366 (KX 56.3.5).

41In 1706, the governor of Yunnan impeached Tong Guorang, his provincial administration commissioner, as "avaricious and inferior." Two-and-a-half years later, Tong received a new appointment, as administration commissioner for Hunan, and he was promoted to the governorship of Jiangxi at the end of 1712.

He seems to have avoided impeachment in another, more routine matter just months before the Meng Guangzu case caught up with him. *QSL*, 6: 260 (*Shengzu shilu, juan* 225), KX 45.4.15, *renyin*; *Qingdai zhiguan nianbiao*, 3: 1802–5 and 2: 1570–74; *KXHW*, 7: 461–63 (Tong's memorial of KX 55.10.2).

42Tong Guorang was a son of Tong Zhuangnian, a company commander in the Chinese Plain Blue Banner. (He referred to his father in a memorial of September 1715. *Gongzhongdang Kangxichao zouzhe*, 5: 658 [KX 54.8.17].) On Tong Zhuangnian, see *Baqi tongzhi*, 1: 284 (*juan* 16). On the Tong family's role in the competition for the heirdom, see Silas Wu, *Passage to Power*, 140–42, 145; and *ECCP* 2: 794–96. Yinsi (1681–1726) was the Kangxi emperor's eighth son, and an active competitor for the succession. *ECCP*, 2: 926–27.

43Tong was included in a group of exiles ordered to "manage [the financing of military campaigns] through contribution" (*juanban*), with the promise of voided sentences if they "exerted themselves" (*xiaoli*). After this he disappears from the historical record. *QSL*, 6: 675 (*Shengzu shilu, juan* 273), KX 56.7.9, *xinyou*; and 6: 724 (*Shengzu shilu, juan* 278), KX 57.3.14, *guihai*. On the expiation of crimes through various forms of "exertion" and monetary contributions to military campaigns, see Waley-Cohen, *Exile in Mid-Qing China*, 64–65, 198.

44Kuhn, *Soulstealers*, 188, 190–221.

45*KXQJZ*, 3: 2365 (KX 56.3.5). See also *QSL*, 6: 662 (*Shengzu shilu, juan* 271), KX 56.3.5, *gengshen*.

46*KXQJZ*, 3: 2385 (KX 56.4.19).

47See Goodrich, *The Literary Inquisition of Ch'ien-lung*, and Spence, *Treason by the Book*.

48Tallies (*kanhe*): "When an official or soldiers traveling via the post road arrive at a station, they must show the local officials the certifying documents issued by the Board of War; when these are examined and found to be in good order the things [needed] will be supplied. Such certifying documents are called 'tallies.'" E-tu Zen Sun, *Ch'ing Administrative* Terms, no. 1567.

49*QSL*, 6: 672 (*Shengzu shilu, juan* 272), KX 56.5.7, *gengshen*.

50*KXHW* 7: 828–29 (KX 56.4.16); *QSL*, 6: 741 (*Shengzu shilu, juan* 280), KX 57.8.7, *guiwei*.

51*KXQJZ*, 3: 2385 (KX 56.4.19), 2387 (KX 56.4.22); *QSL*, 6: 675 (*Shengzu shilu, juan* 273), KX 56.7.9, *xinyou*, and 741 (*Shengzu shilu, juan* 280), KX 57.8.7, *guiwei*.

52The first two terms come from *KXMW*, p.1174, no. 2962 (KX 56.2.9); the third comes from *KXHW*, 7: 559–61 (KX 55.12.6).

53Prohibitions, some voicing frustration with the pervasiveness of

such abuses, were announced in 1666, 1668, 1671, 1679, and 1680. *Shengzu shilu*, 18: 4–5; 25: 20; 35: 12; 83: 8; and 92: 20, quoted in Meng, *Kangxi di*, 350–51.

54I borrow the term "privy power" from Frederic Wakeman's discussion of powerful household slaves in late-Ming Jiangnan. Wakeman, *The Great Enterprise*, 1: 624.

55*KXQJZ*, 3: 2365 (KX 56.3.5).

56Wakeman, *Great Enterprise*, 2: 862.

57Liu's memorial of KX 54.11.2, in *Gongzhongdang Kangxichao zouzhe*, 5: 808–9.

58*Gongzhongdang Kangxichao zouzhe*, 6: 52–53 (KX 55.2.1).

59Ibid., 9: 945–46 (KX 56.5.6).

60See Meng, *Kangxi di*, 349–55, esp. 354–55.

61See Silas Wu, *Communication and Imperial Control*, 1–65; and Spence, *Ts'ao Yin and the K'ang-hsi Emperor*, 213–54.

2. SECRET AGENTS: HIGH TIDE AND DISAPPEARANCE, 1723–1800

Epigraph: Nikolai Gogol, *The Government Inspector*, 249 (act 1, scene 1).

1*YZHW*, 6: 740–42 (YZ 4.1.29).

2*GZDYZ*, 7: 195–96 (YZ 4.12.25), 373–74 (YZ 5.1.25), 378–79 (YZ 5.1.25), and 507–8 (YZ 5.2.17). This was the phantom the Yongzheng emperor characterized as "another Meng Guangzu."

3*GZDYZ*, 15: 265–66 (YZ 7.12.9); 15: 324–25 (YZ 7.12.15); and 16: 412 (YZ 8.5.11). According to an institutional dictionary recently published by Qing archivists, the honorific *Da laoye* was used to address officials of Ranks 5 and 6 (such as, in the capital bureaucracy, bureau directors, vice-directors, and secretaries, and Grand Secretariat and Hanlin Academy copy-readers). *Qingdai dianzhang zhidu cidian*, 213.

4*YZHW*, 25: 604–5 (YZ 11.12.12); *GZDYZ*, 22: 437–38 (YZ 11.12.12), 444–46 (YZ 11.12.16).

5*GZDYZ*, 11: 429–30 (YZ 6.9.27).

6*GZDYZ*, 14: 890–91 (YZ 7.11.10).

7*GZDYZ*, 11: 429–30 (YZ 6.9.27); 14: 890–91 (YZ 7.11.10); and 17: 178–79 (YZ 8.11.15).

8*GZDYZ*, 14: 341–42 (YZ 7.9.8).

9Archival sources are listed in the Appendix.

10*YZHW*, 26: 749–50 (YZ 12.7.25); *GZDYZ*, 24: 791–93 (YZ 13.6.8). Yin'e (1683–1741) was the tenth son of the Kangxi emperor. On his participation in the succession struggle and subsequent confinement, see *ECCP*, 2: 928–29; and Pei Huang, *Autocracy at Work*, 67, 97.

11*ECCP*, 2: 927–29.

12*ECCP*, 2: 927–29, 930–31; *Qingshi biannian*, 4: 201–4.

13*ECCP*, 2: 922–23.

14Ibid., 2: 925, 929–30. The names of the eldest and fourteenth princes are homophonic and both romanized as Yinti, but the second syllables (*ti*) are written differently in both Manchu and Chinese.

15*ECCP*, 1: 87–89; Pei Huang, *Autocracy at Work*, 102–7. Nian was permitted to commit suicide on January 13, 1726 (YZ 3.12.11).

16The sentence, commuted from immediate to "after the assizes," was never carried out. Yue was released by the Qianlong emperor three years later. *ECCP*, 2: 958–59; *Qingshi gao*, 3: 2667–70 (*juan* 296, pp. 10367–77). For more on Yue Zhongqi, particularly on his role in the Zeng Jing sedition case, see Spence, *Treason by the Book*.

17*YZHW*, 6: 740–42 (YZ 4.1.29). On the rise and fall of Nian's "faction," see Pei Huang, *Autocracy at Work*, 102–7. Huang states that "Punishment of his followers lasted until 1728" (p. 107).

18This was the abovementioned Hai Zihong. *YZHW*, 26: 749–50 (YZ 12.7.25).

19*GZDYZ*, 24: 791–93 (YZ 13.6.8).

20*YZHW*, 1: 29–30 (YZ 1.1.29). The memorialist quoted the eunuch's reference to "Mother Li" (Li Niangniang), possibly a reference to the Kangxi emperor's An Concubine or the Yongzheng emperor's Qi Consort-in-Ordinary, both surnamed Li. *Qing huangshi sipu*, 2: 14b and 18b, respectively.

21Feng, *Yongzheng zhuan*, 443–45, 449–53.

22*GZDYZ*, 3: 38 (YZ 2.8.8). The substitute or surrogate monk (*tiseng*) was a Ming tradition in which, upon the birth of an imperial prince, a child would be chosen to receive the tonsure and become a Buddhist monk in the prince's stead. I have found no other references to the institution persisting into the Qing period. *Foguang da cidian*, 3: 5042; *Foxue da cidian*, 4: 2214.

23*GZDYZ*, 3: 38 (YZ 2.8.8), joint memorial of Famin and Chen Shouchuang.

24The case reports do not identify the prince, but the name "Monk Four" suggests a connection to the newly enthroned emperor, Yinzhen, the Kangxi emperor's fourth son.

25*GZDYZ*, 3: 38 (YZ 2.8.8).

26*GZDYZ*, 3: 171–72 (YZ 2.9.11).

27*GZDYZ*, 3: 384–85 (YZ 2.10.28).

28*Yongzheng qijuzhu ce*, 1: 499 (YZ 3.5.25); *Yongzhengchao Hanwen yuzhi huibian*, 3: 89–90.

29*Yongzheng qijuzhu ce*, 1: 499.

30*GZDYZ*, 16: 231–32 (YZ 8.4.15).

31Imperial edict of YZ 8.5.12 in *Yongzhengchao Hanwen yuzhi huibian*,

5: 90–91. It can also be found in *Yongzheng qijuzhu ce*, 5: 3628–29.

32Ibid.

33*GZDYZ*, 3: 813 (YZ 3.2.5).

34Ibid.

35Imperial Prince Guo (Guo Qinwang): This was Yunli (originally Yinli, 1697–1738), seventeenth son of the Kangxi emperor. *ECCP*, 1: 331, Feng, *Yongzheng zhuan*, 599.

36*GZDYZ*, 17: 383–84 (YZ 8.12.20).

37Shilin's memorial of YZ 9.1.10 in *Yongzheng zhupi yuzhi, han* 18, *ce* 4. The original is not extant.

38Imperial rescript to Shilin's memorial of YZ 9.1.10, in *Yongzheng zhupi yuzhi, han* 18, *ce* 4.

39On Fan's connections with the Imperial Household Department, see Ho, *The Ladder of Success*, 283–86; and Torbert, *The Ch'ing Imperial Household Department*, 92–93. Ho referred to the Fans as "designated merchants of the Imperial Household Department" and "government contractors", while Torbert uses the term "Nei-wu-fu [Imperial Household Department] merchant").

40In organizational sociology and strategic analysis, the term "zone of uncertainty" (*zone d'incertitude*) refers to an area within a formal system (such as a modern bureaucracy or business enterprise) in which power relations among "actors" remain undefined. Within such zones, actors can therefore use whatever special knowledge, skills, or other resources they may possess to gain advantages over others. Qing impostors were neither bureaucrats nor business managers, but they did take advantage of gray areas in their political system to finagle material benefits, and it is in this sense that the uncertainty concept applies. The fascinating difference, of course, is that they were impostors, manipulating a system to which they did not in fact belong. The seminal works on zones of uncertainty, still influential today, are Crozier, *The Bureaucratic Phenomenon*, and Crozier and Friedberg, *Actors and Systems*. I am grateful to Professor Dominique Darbon of the Institute for Political Science, Center for African Studies, Bordeaux, for introducing me to this concept.

41Palace memorial of Yunlu et al., QL 6.9.25, reproduced in Lü, "Qianlong liunian." Hongzhou (1712–70) was the Qianlong emperor's younger brother and fifth son of the Yongzheng emperor. The brothers were said to be close, but Hongzhou's public life appears to have been limited to mainly ceremonial responsibilities. Zhaolian, *Xiaoting zalu*, 21 (*juan* 3); *ECCP*, 2: 919; Kahn, *Monarchy in the Emperor's Eyes*, 113; *Qingshi biannian*, 6: 111.

42JJD 2778 (QL 13.*r*7.12), 2808 (QL 13.*r*7.20), and 3442 (QL 13.9.28). Yinxi (1711–58), the first Prince Shen, was the twenty-first son of the Kangxi emperor. The Qianlong emperor elevated him to prince of the second degree in 1735. *Qingshi gao*, 3: 2344–45 (*juan* 220, pp. 9084–85); *ECCP*, 1: 112.

43*GZDQL*, 23: 738–40 (QL 30.1.22), 24: 617–21 (QL 30.4.16). The perpetrator, whose name was Wang Yue, had been left in charge of his father's milling business but spent all the money and then took to the road. In eight months of wandering, from May through December of 1764, he told his victims that he was the adoptive son (he variously used the terms *yizi* and *gan erzi*) of the Fifth Prince—the same personage from whom the mule driver Xiong Shixian claimed, in autumn of that same year, to have received a silver medal.

44LFZZ 1397-013 (QL 30.3, no day). See also the accompanying depositions in frames 1658–69.

45Zhaolian, *Xiaoting zalu*, 177–78 (*juan* 6); *Qingshi gao*, 3: 2343 (*juan* 220, p. 9077); *ECCP*, 2: 961. According to Zhaolian, the boy was executed in Xinjiang. According to the *Qingshi gao*, the emperor ordered that he be moved to Heilongjiang, but when he reached Urga (Ulan Bator) in Outer Mongolia the imperial agent there had him strangled.

46*Qianlongchao shangyudang*, 13: 557–58, no. 1363 (QL 51.10.28); LFZZ, reel 98, frames 1722–23 (QL 51.12.12) and 1769–71 (Liao Ke's deposition); and LFZZ 1211-040 (QL 56.10.1).

47Zhaolian, *Xiaoting zalu*, 178 (*juan* 6). On Zhaolian and his famous notes see *ECCP*, 1: 78–80.

48*Qingdai quanshi*, 4: 232–36.

49The Manchu pronunciation of the name Fu Tianbao might have been "Futiyamboo," but Xia used the name in Chinese form. In the letter that he gave to the innkeeper, he addressed his alleged mother as "Venerable Lady Fu" and referred to himself as "your unworthy son, Tianbao." Later, under interrogation, he explained that he invented the Fu Tianbao persona because he had heard of a prominent "Lord Fu" in the capital. LFZZ 03-1436-018 (QL 51.12.12), enclosure; LFZZ 1211-040 (QL 56.10.1).

50*ECCP*, 1: 252–53.

51*ECCP*, 1: 259; *Qingdai zhiguan nianbiao*, 1: 140–42.

52*ECCP*, 1: 253–55; Dai Yi, *Qianlong di ji qi shidai*, 530–43; *Qingshi gao*, 3: 2806 (*juan* 330, pp. 10917–19); *Qingdai zhiguan nianbiao*, 1: 70, 141–42, 245; 2: 1432.

53Fukang'an confirmed that the address was correct. LFZZ, reel 98, frames 1652–55 (QL 51.11.4). The alley, called the East Four Arches Alley Number Two (Dongsi Pailou Ertiao Hutong), was

still there in the summer of 2011.

54*ECCP*, 1: 249; *Qingdai zhiguan nianbiao*, 1: 142, 432–36.

55*Qingshi gao*, 3: 2813 (*juan* 331, p. 10946); *Qingdai zhiguan nianbiao*, 3: 2310, 2311–12; 4: 3228; *ECCP*, 1: 578.

56LFZZ 1397–013 (QL 30.3, no day).

57*Qianlongchao shangyudang*, 13: 557–58, no. 1363 (QL 51.10.28).

58*ECCP*, 1: 1; Wakeman, *Great Enterprise*, 1: 162–66.

59Pei Huang, *Autocracy at Work*, 168–73; Feng, *Yongzheng zhuan*, 294–300.

60See *ECCP*, 1: 378, 574, and 2: 965. His immediate successor was also fortunate, perhaps, in having only three brothers who lived to maturity. Ibid., 1: 919.

61Tang Wenji and Luo Qingsi, *Qianlong zhuan*, 34–36.

62Ibid., 36. See also Dai Yi, *Qianlong di ji qi shidai*, 133–34. Dai concludes, "The Yunlu and Hongxi case signaled the end of the early Qing imperial family's long internal dissension."

63*Yongzhengchao Hanwen yuzhi huibian*, 2: 257–58, edict of YZ 13.9.6.

64Ibid., 2: 272–73, edict of YZ 13.9.14.

65A court letter was a confidential imperial edict, drafted by inner court deputies (grand councillors, from the early Qianlong years onward) under the emperor's orders, which contained his response to a palace memorial. It was dispatched in the form of a letter from the said officials relaying the imperial instructions to one or more specifically designated recipients. Bartlett, *Monarchs and Ministers*, 104–6, 217–18.

66*Yongzhengchao Hanwen yuzhi huibian*, 2: 324-26, edict of YZ 13.10.16. The draft, with the emperor's interlinear additions in vermilion ink, appears on pp. 325–26, and a copy with these additions incorporated into the text proper appears on pp. 324–25. For procedures governing the distribution of such "vermilioned" court letters to multiple addressees, see Bartlett, *Monarchs and Ministers*, 104, 328n43.

67*Yongzhengchao Hanwen yuzhi huibian*, 2: 288, edict of YZ 13.9.23.

68Ibid. A subsequent edict, issued six weeks later, expanded the license system to include Daoist priests. *Yongzhengchao Hanwen yuzhi huibian*, 2: 351–52 (YZ 13.11.7).

69For the Qianlong emperor's bureaucratic response to perceived and suspected sedition, see Goodrich, *The Literary Inquisition of Ch'ien-lung*, and Kuhn, *Soulstealers*.

70*QSL*, 14: 705 (*Gaozong shilu, juan* 438), QL 18.5.2, *dingsi*.

71*GZDQL*, 5: 555–56 (QL 18.6.6). See also *GZDQL*, 5: 864 (QL 18.7.20), 886 (QL 18.7.24).

72LFZZ 1385–010 (QL 19.2.4).

73Jingšeo was a general by grace (*feng'en jiangjun*), the twelfth and

lowest title. Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, no. 1978. Brunnert and Hagelstrom rendered it "Noble of the Imperial lineage of the twelfth rank." Brunnert and Hagelstrom, *Present Day Political Organization of China*, no. 27.

74Under interrogation, he claimed that his "master" was in fact a party to the scheme. Provincial officials doubted the veracity of this assertion. LFZZ 1384-046 (QL 18.12.15), Fan Guancheng; LFZZ 1384-053 (QL 18.12.15), enclosed depositions of Liu Si and accomplices. Fan's memorial was published in *Shiliao xunkan*, no. 26 (1931).

75See, for example, Perdue, *Exhausting the Earth*, chapter 4; and Will, *Bureaucracy and Famine in Eighteenth-Century China*. On the development of routinized provincial administration in the eighteenth century, and particularly the appointment and pivotal roles of governors, see Guy, *Qing Governors and Their Provinces*.

76Bartlett, *Monarchs and Ministers*, 270–78.

77For the history of the Grand Council see Bartlett, *Monarchs and Ministers*. For the smoldering tensions between routine and arbitrary power and the moralistic, bullying tone of the Qianlong emperor's personal interventions in "political" cases, see Kuhn, *Soulstealers*, chapter 9.

78Bartlett, *Monarchs and Ministers*, 169–99, 270–78.

79Yoon, "Prosperity with the Help of 'Villains,'" 485–503. In a revisionist examination of the Heshen years, Yoon argues that by playing these factions against each other and thereby checking their worst abuses, the emperor produced two decades of dynastic strength and efficiency, which helped him to improve government administration, expand the frontiers, and fill the treasury (pp. 503–13, 521–26). Wensheng Wang offers a much darker view, placing the ruler's manipulation of the Grand Council and other inner-court agencies in the context of unsustainable autocratic centralization and military expansion, overextensions that drove state and society to the brink of disaster before a wiser Jiaqing emperor pulled them back from the abyss. Wensheng Wang, *White Lotus Rebels and South China Pirates*, 120–24.

80Yoon, "Prosperity with the Help of 'Villains,'" 493–96.

81The emperor's final statement on the Fu Tianbao case was this: "[With] this kind of major fugitive, if the governors-general and governors can strictly enjoin their subordinates to press the investigation and track them down carefully, there is absolutely no reason that they should remain at large over time." *Qianlongchao shangyudang*, 16: 521–22, no. 1207 (QL 56.10.11).

82Voigt's *tour de force* was reported around the world, and he became an international celebrity after his release from prison a few years

later. He and his famous heist would ultimately be immortalized in Carl Zuckmayer's play *The Captain of Köpenick*. Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 596–98.

83Clark, *Iron Kingdom*, 598–600.

84Beresford, "Introduction," 2–4.

85Ibid., 22–24. Whether or not Gogol was aware of it, there was also the actual case of Roman Medoks, a brash young cavalry captain whose career of forgery, imposture, and false denunciations reached its peak in the decade before Gogol created Khlestakov. Lotman, "Concerning Khlestakov," 169–77.

86Beresford, "Introduction," 22–23; Ehre, "Introduction," xvii–xviii.

87Lotman, "Concerning Khlestakov," 167–86.

Epigraph: The translation is Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang's, in Wu Ching-tzu, *The Scholars*, 626. For the original see Wu Jingzi, *Rulin waishi*, 388 (chapter 50).

1The story appeared in *Yantang jianwen zalu* (*zaji* in some editions) and later, under the title "The Bandit Prefect" (Lülin taishou), in *Qingdai lizhi congtan*. [Wang Jiazhen], *Yantang jianwen zalu*, 369–70; [Wang Jiazhen], *Yantang jianwen zaji*, 41b–42; *Qingdai lizhi congtan*, 78 (*juan* 1).

2Chizhou: modern Guichi county, Anhui. *Zhongguo gujin diming da cidian*, 330; *Zhongguo lidai zhengqu yan'ge*, 293.

3[Wang Jiazhen], *Yantang jianwen zalu*, 369.

4*Jinjiang xian zhi*, 11:73; *Chizhou fu zhi*, 27:31b.

5*Jinjiang xian zhi*, 11:67, 74b.

6Four other impostors wanted to be officials, and the remaining three were concerned about prestige. Both officeholding and prestige were themselves conducive to acquiring wealth, and could have been seen as vehicles for achieving it.

7NGDK 39661 (arrived SZ 16.12.28); XKQT, QL 1.7.19 (*juan* 307).

8ZPZZ 0305-047 (QL 36.12.7); 0318-003 (QL 37.2.18).

9ZPZZ 0236-031 (QL 24.10.9); *QSL*, 16: 649–50, 652–53 (*Gaozong shilu, juan* 597), QL 24.9.16, *guihai* and QL 24.9.18, *yichou*, respectively; *HDSL*, 9: 979 (*juan* 824).

10Every county had a jail where suspects, and often witnesses as well, were confined in the course of an investigation. The jailor (*dianshi*), appointed by the throne, was chiefly responsible for keeping the jail secure and ensuring that the incarcerated were not abused or neglected by their keepers. He might also assist the magistrate in supervising constables and at times even serve as an assistant magistrate. Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, nos. 6638 and 2724; Ch'ü, *Local Government*, 8–9, 13, 210n99.

11Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, no. 2724(2).

12ZPZZ 0305-047 (QL 36.12.7); 0318-003 (QL 37.2.18); 0236-031 (QL 24.10.9); *QSL*, 16: 649–50 (*Gaozong shilu, juan* 597), QL 24.9.16, *guihai*.

13The registrar (*jingli*) supervised the registry (*jingli si*), a document handling or management office in various capital and provincial government agencies. The rank ranged from 5a to 8b. Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, nos. 1227 and 1228.

14NGDK 39661 (arrived SZ 16.12.28).

15Ibid.

16Information on this case is drawn from a routine memorial submitted by Shi Yizhi, acting Huguang governor-general and concurrent Hubei governor, on August 25, 1736. XKQT, QL 1.7.19

(*juan* 307).

17According to the *Qingdai dianzhang zhidu cidian*, the honorific term *Laoye* referred to officials of ranks 7 and 8 (including, among others, department and county magistrates). Hucker called it an "unofficial reference to any official dignitary," particularly a county magistrate. *Qingdai dianzhang zhidu cidian*, 213; Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, 302.

18Certificate of appointment: "An official going from the capital to his provincial post must first receive a written document . . . which upon arrival at the province is submitted to his superior for official inspection." E-tu Zen Sun, *Ch'ing Administrative Terms*, nos. 49 and 394.

19*GZDYZ*, 14: 890–91 (YZ 7.11.10); ZPZZ 0206-024 (QL 16.5.10); LFZZ 0170-068 (QL 46.10.20).

20LFZZ 1421-006 (QL 41.5.15).

21For the first three, see ZPZZ 0226-010 (QL 23.9.6); ZPZZ 04-01-28-0002-013 (QL 23.11.6); JJD 26019 (QL 44.12.22); JJD 45338 (QL 55.9.5), 45528 (QL 55.9.27).

22"We'll use the boards" (*yao jiale*): This would have been the ankle press (*jiagun*), a judicial torture device constructed with three wooden boards. According to a substatute in Article 1 of the Qing code, it was to be used sparingly and only when suspected thieves or murderers refused to confess. A celebrated seventeenth-century magistrate's handbook notes: "For those who refuse to confess during hearings, squeezers of fingers and ankles are employed." *LLTK*, 193, 202n17; Huang Liu-hong, *A Complete Book Concerning Happiness and Benevolence*, 273, 275–76.

23Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, nos. 7611, 7612, and 4355.

24LFZZ 1445-017 (QL 58.9.12).

25*GZDQL*, 18: 484–85 (QL 28.7.14) and 19: 548–50 (QL 28.11.10).

26Information on this case comes from the Grand Council file copy of a palace memorial submitted by Anhui governor Min Eyuan in June 1776. LFZZ 1421-006 (QL 41.5.15).

27Fuheng had died in 1770, the very year Shen Zhouqi left home. *ECCP*, 1: 252.

28Fuheng's third son was Fukang'an, who had risen from imperial bodyguard to junior vice-president of the Board of Revenue and then lieutenant-general of the Bordered Yellow Banner, and who at the time was earning his fame in the Jinchuan campaigns in Sichuan. No provincial civil posts were involved. *ECCP*, 1: 254.

29The following narrative is based on Luo Fenpeng's confession, quoted in Jiangxi governor Tang Pin's memorial of QL 28.3.19, and on Tang's memorial of QL 28.4.27. *GZDQL*, 17: 243–46 and 566–70, respectively.

30At least one other case featured a fictional boating accident. In 1767, a magistrate's servant, who had been dismissed for drunkenness, posed as an expectant rural official whose luggage had been swept away in a storm. LFZZ 1401-056 (QL 32.11.3).

31On the Qianlong emperor's "valorization of poetry" and painting and calligraphy through the southern tours, see Michael Chang, *A Court on Horseback*, 265–71.

32*Qing huidian, juan* 29; *HDSL, juan* 326–28. See also Guo et al., *Qingchao dianzhi*, 100–28. For terms and discussion in English, see Scott, *Chinese Costume in Transition*, chapter 2.

33Officials and their posts were classified into nine ranks, each rank further divided into two classes, from 1a and 1b (the highest) to 9a and 9b (the lowest). See Brunnert and Hagelstrom, *Present Day Political Organization*, no. 965; and Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, 95 and no. 1315.

34*GZDQL*, 17: 243–46 (QL 28.3.19), 566–70 (QL 28.4.27); JJD 45338 (QL 55.9.5), 45528 (QL 55.9.27); ZPZZ 0500-014 (JQ 11.9.23), and LFZZ 03-2444-007 (confession enclosed with memorial of JQ 11.7.17).

35The Imperial College (Guozi Xue or Taixue), located in the dynastic capital and operated by the Directorate of Education (Guozi Jian), was the Qing vestige of ancient institutions established to train men for official careers. During the Qing few actually attended but the title of student still conferred prestige and other benefits, and thousands acquired it through purchase. English renderings vary, including "National University" and "Imperial Academy." Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, nos. 856, 3541, 3542, and 6168; Ho, *The Ladder of Success*, 32–34.

36In 1730, the Guangdong administration commissioner reported the widespread problem of runners presenting themselves as officials, with all the accouterments and regalia. In 1763, new punishments were instituted for clerks who wore official hat knobs without having earned the privilege. *GZDYZ*, 15: 409–10 (YZ 8.1.2); *Qingshi biannian*, 5: 735, citing *GZDQL*, 18: 513.

37Wang Yunying, *Zai tian xiuse*, 87.

38Sun Dianqi (1894–1958) listed eighteen shops that sold the registers in Beijing's Liulichang commercial district. In a search of fifteen libraries in the Beijing area, the modern scholar Zhang Yingyu found more than a hundred extant editions produced by forty-seven different printers, all in Liulichang, between 1661 and 1911. One of these establishments, Ronglu Tang, appears to have printed the registers over a period of some two hundred and fifty years, from 1663 to 1917. Sun Dianqi, *Liulichang xiaozhi*, 154; Zhang Yingyu, "Qingdai jinshen lu lüekao," 121–23, 124.

39Zhang Yingyu, “Qingdai jinshen lu lüekao,” 117.
40Ibid., 119–20.
41See, for example, *Da Qing shiji quanbian*.
42According to Zhang Yingyu, the earliest extant register in Beijing is a Ming edition dated 1584, but the genre can be traced to the pre-imperial *Book of Lord Shang*, the *Rituals of Zhou*, and the *Zuo Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals*. Zhang notes the titles of numerous now-lost registers from the Sui, Tang, and Song eras. Zhang Yingyu, “Qingdai jinshen lu lüekao,” 116–17, 121.
43Kong Shangren, *Taohua shan*, 101–2. The translation is modified from Chen and Acton’s translation in *The Peach Blossom Fan*, 110. Among other minor differences, Chen and Acton rendered *jinshen bianlan* as “directory of nobles and officials.”
44Li Yu, *Yu saotou*, 1:24.
45Wu Jingzi, *Rulin waishi*, 176. The translation draws, with modifications, from that in Wu Ching-tzu, *The Scholars*, 283.
46Xingbu dang, Zhili si, 00330 (DG 7.5.2).
47JJD 26019 (QL 44.12.22).
48Xingbu dang, Zhili si, 00330 (DG 7.5.2).
49According to the rule of avoidance (*huibi*), an official was not permitted to serve in his home province or, if in a neighboring province, within 500 *li* of his hometown. Ch’ü, *Local Government*, 21–22, 215n35; Guo et al., *Qingchao dianzhi*, 266–68.
50Huang Liu-hung, *A Complete Book Concerning Happiness and Benevolence*, 154.
51Ibid., 154–55.
52*YZHW*, 11: 755 (YZ 6.2.23).
53NGXF 2343-11 (YZ 9.12.14).
54ZPZZ 0332-008 (QL 39.12.22), LFZZ 03-1416-009 (QL 40.1.21); GZDJQ, 14: 709–10 (JQ 6.8.13); GZDJQ, 18: 709–13 (JQ 7.2.25).
55ZPZZ 0206-024 (QL 16.5.10); 14-08-007 (QL 35.2.29 rescript); 0294-043 (QL 35.12.14); 0305-047 (QL 36.12.7); and 0318-003 (QL 37.2.18).
56*GZDYZ*, 14: 890–91 (YZ 7.11.10).
57JJD 12667 (QL 35.10.12), 26019 (QL 44.12.22), 45338 (QL 55.9.5), and 45528 (QL 55.9.27).
58*GZDQL*, 17: 243–46 (QL 28.3.19), 566–70 (QL 28.4.27); LFZZ 1397-013 (QL 30.3, no day); JJD 11869 (QL 35.4.10 [actually QL 35.4.16]).
59LFZZ 1445-017 (QL 58.9.12); XKQT, JQ 5.*r*4.10 (*juan* 226).
59*GZDQL*, 17: 568.

4. PHONY COPS: THE PERSISTENCE OF POLICE IMPERSONATION

Epigraph: NGDK 054321 (QL 15.11.5).
1Information on this case comes from a routine memorial submitted

by Anhui governor Alinbao on July 30, 1803. XKQT, JQ 8.6.12 (*juan* 140).

2Article 361, substatute 2 of the Qing code. *DLCY*, 5: 1072.

3See the Appendix for a list of the memorials consulted.

4XKWJ, QL 40.[4.21] (*juan* 9979).

5Hsiao, *Rural China*, 43–45.

6Dai Yi and Zhang Shiming, *18 shiji de Zhongguo yu shijie*, 66; Antony, "Subcounty Officials," 43.

7*Buyi* (constables): Less common variations were *bukuai, jiankuai*, and *yingbu*. Ch'ü T'ungtsu (Qu Tongzu) translated all of these terms as "policeman." Ch'ü, *Local Government*, 57.

8The sample does not, of course, represent all or even most of the cases that would have come to the state's attention.

9There are only two clear exceptions among these cases: In one, a merchant hired two men to pose as runners to help him collect a debt. In the other, a dismissed county runner assumed his old role again to arrest a man who had injured him when he tried to press payment for overdue taxes. The memorial reporting the case stated that the ex-runner was exacting revenge for his injury in the previous encounter, but it is also possible that he hoped to get his old job back by delivering the wanted man to the yamen. XKTZ 14007-017 (QL 42, no month or day); and "Gongzhongdang Daoguangchao zouzhe," 4: 440–43 (DG 18.1.19).

10Officials may have had their own purposes for including such statements in their reports, but this does not negate the fact that the offenders were trying to get cash or silver.

11NGXF 2385-18 (YZ 8, no month or day).

12NGDK 054321 (QL 15.11.5).

13On nominations, see Reed, *Talons and Teeth*, 135. For an example of paying a "gift" in order to gain employment as a yamen clerk, see XKWJ, QL 1, no month or day (*juan* 9973).

14JJD 45616 (QL 55.9.2).

15NGDK 54859 (QL 15.12.17).

16LFZZ 1399-017 (QL 31.4.1).

17On gambling prohibitions, see *DLCY*, 5: 1100–1106; Jiang, *Great Ming Code*, 418 (Article 402); and Jones, *Great Qing Code*, 354 (Article 378).

18XKWJ, JQ 13.7.10 (*juan* 10037).

19NGXF 2322-9 (YZ 3.4.16).

20XKQT, JQ 8.11.29 (*juan* 140); XKTZ 09070-019 (JQ 9.5.20).

21*GZDQL*, 4: 198–99 (QL 17.10.29); JJD 12274 (QL 35.7.2); NGDK 081477 (QL 36.2.4); JJD 14190 (QL 36.5.20); ZPZZ, *falü, qita*, QL 36.5.27 (*juan* 56, *bao* 19).

22ZPZZ, *falü, qita*, QL 24.3.3 (*juan* 55, *bao* 20); JJD 57252 (DG

7.10.23).

23LFZZ 1391-005 (QL 26.5.28), 1391-013 (QL 26.9.25), and 0251-017 (QL 26.11.23); JJD 12274 (QL 35.7.2); and NGDK 081477 (QL 36.2.4).

24XKQT, QL 1.11.11 (*juan* 295).

25LFZZ 4029-027 (DG 4.*r*7.15). A string (*diao*) of 1,000 cash was theoretically equivalent to one ounce of silver, less during the Daoguang period. Zhang Yan, *Qingdai jingji jianshi*, 317, 326.

26LFZZ 1391-005 (QL 26.5.28). Ma Chaozhu was a rebel leader active in the mountains along the Anhui-Hubei border in the early 1750s. Officials had been hunting for him since 1752, when they discovered his conspiracy and snuffed out a hastily called uprising. They never found him, and the Qianlong emperor would finally give up on the case in 1771, after nearly twenty years of fruitless pursuit. *Qingdai quanshi*, 4: 214–15; *QSL*, 14: 399–400 (*Gaozong shilu, juan* 413), QL 17.4.18, *jiyou* and 19: 1007–8 (*Gaozong shilu, juan* 894), QL 36.10.3, *gengwu*. For a brief overview in English, see Kuhn, *Soulstealers*, 62–64.

27LFZZ 1391-013 (QL 26.9.25).

28LFZZ 1399-017 (QL 31.4.1). Several months previously, the Suzhou tax circuit official Duan Chenggong had been impeached and dismissed for conniving with underlings to commit extortion. *QSL*, 18: 279 (*Gaozong shilu, juan* 752), QL 31.1.13, *guiwei*.

29*GZDQL*, 74: 109–11 (QL 54.11.12); JJD 43657 (QL 55.2.20).

30JJD 43697 (QL 55.2.9); JJD 45768 (QL 55.10.20 rescript).

31XKWJ, QL 40.[4.21] (*juan* 9979).

32Command arrow (*lingjian*): "All provincial governors and governors-general as well as high-ranking army commanders are given flags and arrows each bearing the word 'command.' These are used as proof of authority when ordering the transfer [or deployment] of troops." E-tu Zen Sun, *Ch'ing Administrative Terms*, no. 1550.

33There are parallels here with the impersonation of constables and other law officers in England at the beginning of the eighteenth century. A recent study of that phenomenon in London notes that impostors were usually out to extort money, and that they often used fake warrants and other symbols of public authority. Hurl-Eamon, "The Westminster Impostors," 463–71.

34*KXMW*, p. 1597, no. 3953 (no date, submitted between KX 53.8.14 and KX 61).

35Ch'ü, *Local Government*, 57–58; Reed, *Talons and Teeth*, 125–28; Zhou, *Qingdai difang liyi zhidu yanjiu*, 195–96. For the runner hierarchy Ch'ü used the terms *chief, regular*, and *extra runners*. I follow Reed's usage of *head, local*, and *assistant*.

36In some locales, they shared this task with other runners,

particularly the "swift hands" (*kuaishou*) group of horsemen and foot messengers and the commoner guards (*minzhuang*). Ch'ü, *Local Government*, 237n39, 238n48.

37Ch'ü, *Local Government*, 61; Reed, *Talons and Teeth*, 127–28.

38Ch'ü, *Local Government*, 58–59; Reed, *Talons and Teeth*, 129.

39Ch'ü, *Local Government*, 57–60; Reed, *Talons and Teeth*, 142–43.

40Reed, *Talons and Teeth*, 128–29, 145, 294n11.

41Ch'ü, *Local Government*, 57.

42Reed, *Talons and Teeth*, 144.

43Ibid., 129.

44*QSL*, 7: 522 (*Shizong shilu, juan* 34), YZ 3.7.24, *jiwei*.

45Ch'ü, *Local Government*, 59–60; Reed, *Talons and Teeth*, 143. See *DLCY*, 2: 188 (Article 50, statute 1) and 5: 1034 (Article 344, substatute 6).

46Reed, *Talons and Teeth*, 142–43, 294n10.

47Ch'ü, *Local Government*, 58–59; Reed, *Talons and Teeth*, 128, 142–45.

48Ch'ü, *Local Government*, 64–66, 236n9; Reed, *Talons and Teeth*, 132–33; Watt, *District Magistrate*, 154.

49Reed, *Talons and Teeth*, 205.

50Ch'ü, *Local Government*, 69–70; Reed, *Talons and Teeth*, 231. See also Zhou, *Qingdai difang liyi zhidu yanjiu*, 458–63.

51*DLCY*, 5: 1029–37; Ch'ü, *Local Government*, 71. Article, statute, and substatute numbers follow Huang Tsing-chia's edition of Xue Yunsheng's *Duli cunyi*.

52ZPZZ 0070-024 (QL 6.5.1).

53ZPZZ 007-023 (QL 6.5.14); *HDSL*, 9: 1034 (*juan* 830).

54The dynastic capital may have been an exception. Regarding Beijing in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Alison Dray-Novey notes that the gendarmes and policemen on patrol in the capital city "were, in effect, in uniform. They had variously at hand whips, knives and swords, and a long hooked pole used to catch thieves around the neck . . . [T]he distinctive trappings of the gendarmerie and other policemen made the men immediately recognizable." Dray-Novey, "Spatial Order and Police in Imperial Beijing," 897.

55Ch'ü, *Local Government*, 62–63, 66; Reed, *Talons and Teeth*, 153–54.

56Ch'ü, *Local Government*, 62; Ch'ü, *Law and Society*, 137–39.

57Runners appear as "red and black caps" in chapters 1, 18, 25, and 49 of *The Scholars*. Wu Jingzi, *Rulin waishi*, 5, 11n15, 145, 201, 383.

58Ch'ü, *Local Government*, 68–73, 245n163, 164.

59The accomplished magistrate and governor Tian Wenjing (1662–1732/33) wrote: "Constables, thieves, and bandits are all

basically the same. In fact, if a constable was not immediately connected with thieves and bandits, he would not be able to do his job as a constable." *Muling shu*, 20: 46, quoted and translated in Reed, *Talons and Teeth*, 149. Indeed, during the Ming and Qing there were legal precedents for *compelling* convicts to assist in police functions, and a substatute of 1740 required that certain convicted thieves serve as patrolmen (*xunjiing*) in their native places. It is not clear, however, whether the new rule was widely observed. Fu-mei Chang Chen, "Local Control of Convicted Thieves," 122–28.

60Ji Yun (1724–1805), *Yuewei caotang biji, juan* 6, quoted in Jing, *Qingdai shehui de jianmin dengji*, 131.

61Jones, *Great Qing Code*, 82, Article 51; *DLCY*, 2: 190–91; *LLTK*, 353. See also Ch'ü, *Local Government*, 72; Reed, *Talons and Teeth*, 214; and *Qingdai wenshu*, 226.

62Ch'ü, *Local Government*, 79, 249n30.

63*QSL*, 10: 1028 (*Gaozong shilu, juan* 141), QL 6.4.18, *renzi*.

64*DLCY*, 5: 1122 (Article 387, substatute 7).

65ZPZZ 0063-079 (QL 6.6.18); *QSL*, 10: 1147 (*Gaozong shilu, juan* 149), QL 6.8.30, *renxu*.

66Liu Heng, *Yongli yongyan*, 1:5a–b. Liu was an extremely competent magistrate noted for his legal expertise and ability to restore peace and stability to bandit-infested jurisdictions. He rose to the ranks of prefect and intendant, and was the author of several magistrate handbooks. Watt, *District Magistrate*, 256–57, 267n53.

67Liu Heng, *Yongli yongyan*, 1:6b–7.

68*QSL*, 16: 937 (*Gaozong shilu, juan* 616), QL 25.7.14, *bingchen*.

69*HDSL*, 9: 1031 (*juan* 830); *DLCY*, 5: 1122–23, Article 387-08.

70*QSL*, 17: 809–10 (*Gaozong shilu, juan* 697), QL 28.10.23, *bingwu*; and *QSL*, 17: 889 (*Gaozong shilu, juan* 706), QL 29.3.7, *wuwu*.

71*QSL*, 10: 697–98 (*Gaozong shilu, juan* 115), QL 5.4, no day; *HDSL*, 9: 1033–34 (*juan* 830).

72*QSL*, 16: 937 (*Gaozong shilu, juan* 616), QL 25.7.14, *bingchen*.

73LFZZ 1391-005 (QL 26.5.28).

74JJD 12274 (QL 35.7.2); NGDK 081477 (QL 36.2.4).

75LFZZ 1399-017 (QL 31.4.1).

76This often involved appealing to friends or acquaintances to advance part of the sum or serve as guarantors; only then would the impostors release their prey.

77LFZZ 1388-011 (QL 22.6.13).

78ZPZZ 28-0002-012 (QL 23.11.29).

79Xingbu dang, Jiangsu si, 07057 (JQ 13.6.10).

80*YZHW*, 19: 845–46 (YZ 9.1.21).

81*QSL*, 15: 838–39 (*Gaozong shilu, juan* 540), QL 22.6.13, *guiyou*.

82XKQT, QL 45.2.29 (*juan* 269).
83XKQT, JQ 5.12.11 (*juan* 227).
84XKQT, JQ 11.12.10 (*juan* 217). There were no gamblers, and the "prostitute" turned out to be his wife.
85ZPZZ 28-0002-012 (QL 23.11.29).
86When Liu Gou told his fellow villager Wang Keren that he had become a constable and was going to take him to the county yamen for stealing door panels and millet stalks, Wang retorted: "I haven't broken any law, so there's no harm in going with you." NGDK 054321 (QL 15.11.5).
87Given this substantial number (eleven out of sixty-four cases), one wonders how many impostures came to official attention only because they had resulted in a victim's death—and how many others went unnoticed or unreported.
88XKTZ 14007-017 (QL 42, no month or day); XKQT, QL 45.2.29 (*juan* 269).
89XKTZ 06653-005 (QL 36.10.29); "Gongzhongdang Daoguangchao zouzhe," 4: 440–43 (DG 18.1.19).
90XKTZ 11617-024 (DG 22.9.25).
91Again, there are similarities with eighteenth-century London, where in the popular mind constables and other officials were venal and victims feared being caught up in a harsh and capricious judicial system. Hurl-Eamon, "The Westminster Impostors," 463–66.
92*GZDQL*, 74: 110 (QL 54.11.12); JJD 43657 (QL 55.2.20).
93XKWJ, JQ 13.7.10 (*juan* 10037).
94NGDK 054321 (QL 15.11.5). Liu's confession contained the verb *xiang* (thought about, wanted), and the official summary used *yu* (desired, wanted).
95Ibid.
96"Rural district head" (*xiangyue*): Not to be confused with the identical term meaning "community compact," this title referred to a neighborhood surveillance head who reported to the magistrate and in some areas of the southwest also mediated disputes. Ch'ü, *Local Government*, 203n14.
97JJD 45616 (QL 55.9.2).
98NGXF 2322-9 (YZ 3.4.16).
99Yao knew what he was doing when he dumped his salt in the river: in order to secure a conviction, authorities had to seize both the smuggler and the salt. *DLCY*, 3: 375; Jones, *Great Qing Code*, 155, Article 141, statute 1b.
100 LFZZ 1399-017 (QL 31.4.1).
101 XKQT, JQ 8.6.12 (*juan* 140).
102 LFZZ 1391-005 (QL 26.5.28).
103 NGXF 2385-18 (YZ 8, no month or day); XKTZ 06653-005 (QL

36.10.29); JJD 069320 (DG 14.9.12).

104 XKWJ, JQ 13.7.10 (*juan* 10037); NGXF 2322-9 (YZ 3.4.16); XKQT, JQ 11.12.10 (*juan* 217); LFZZ 1388-011, QL 22.6.13.

105 XKQT, JQ 8.6.12 (*juan* 140).

106 NGXF 2385-18 (YZ 8, no month or day).

107 LFZZ 1399-017 (QL 31.4.1).

108 Ibid. The red notations on the "vermilion document" (*zhudan*) denoted the authority of the endorsing official.

109 LFZZ 1417-003, undated memorial of QL 40. The year, 1775, is apparently an error in the archive catalog; Udasan's known dates of tenure (and death in 1771), combined with internal evidence from the memorial itself, suggest a date sometime in the second or third month of QL 36 (1771).

110 XKWJ, JQ 13.7.10 (*juan* 10037).

111 Xingbu dang, Jiangsu si, 07057 (JQ 13.6.10).

112 See chapter 7.

113 Li Wengeng, "Yu Tai'an geshu," 47b.

114 The Yongzheng emperor's "return of the meltage fees to public coffers" (*huohao guigong*) reforms might have had salutary trickle-down effects, but they were undermined by his immediate successors. In particular, the "nourishing virtue silver" (*yanglian yin*) funds were compromised and effectively ruined by 1825. See Zelin, *The Magistrate's Tael*, 283–89, 298–301.

5. FORGERY: GAINING TRUST IN A LAND OF DOCUMENTS AND SEALS

Epigraph: Shuowen jiezi *zhu*, p. 431, *yin*; XKWJ, QL 1.9.4 (*juan* 9776).

1In the Qing period there were six basic types of official seal (*bao* or *xi, yin, guanfang, tuji, tiaoji*, and *qianji*), corresponding to the specific types and ranks of officials who wielded them. The general Chinese term *yinxin* and its English rendering "seal" encompass all six, and I generally use "seal" both to avoid unnecessary clumsiness and also because all were specialized forms of one device: an object with an official's title or the name of an agency engraved on the bottom and which, after being pressed into ink, was stamped on a document (and sometimes the envelope containing it) to identify the issuing authority and authenticate the document. For a brief English-language description of the six types of official seals, see Brunnert and Hagelstrom, *Present Day Political Organization of China*, no. 984. For modern definitions of the seal with reference to its functions throughout Chinese history, see Wang Tingqia, *Zhongguo yinzhang shi*, 15–17; Sun Weizu, *Zhongguo yinzhang*, 2–4; and Sun Weizu, *History and Art of Chinese Seals*, 20–22. The last two citations are to the Chinese- and English-language versions of the same book.

2This applied to eighth- and ninth-ranked civil officials; military officials not responsible for troops, provisions, or accounts; and local religious and medical officials. *Qing huidian*, 34: 2; *Qinding libu zeli*, 46:1.

3*Qing huidian, juan* 34; *Qinding libu zeli, juan* 44–45. In 1748, the Qing court promulgated new standards for the engraving of nearly all official seals. The fundamental change was in the Manchu component, with newly developed Manchu seal scripts (*Qingwen zhuanshu*) replacing the old standard script (*Manwen zhengzi*). On the Chinese side, the number of seal script styles designated for various official ranks increased from five to nine. Figure 5.1 was stamped in 1738 or early 1739, a decade before the adoption of the new standards, whereas figure 5.2, cast in 1751, followed the new standards. For the evolution of specific design standards for seals of the various official ranks, see *HDSL*, 4: 788–89 (*juan* 321). For an overview of the entire official seal system, see Ren, "Qingdai guanyin zhidu zonglun."

4*Qinding libu zeli*, 46:5. Memorials reporting such returns can be found in the Board of Rites archives at the First Historical Archive in Beijing.

5*Qinding libu chufen zeli, juan* 10.

6See chapter 7.

7XKQT, QL 1.7.29 (*juan* 307).

8On the honoring of "chaste widows" in the Qing period, see Theiss, *Disgraceful Matters*, 25–38. Honors included having one's name placed in a local shrine to chaste and filial women.

9The officially sponsored "community drinking" ceremony or local banquet (*xiangyinjiu*) took place, or was supposed to take place, twice annually in department and county seats throughout China, with the magistrate inviting aged and virtuous men as guests of honor. Hsiao, *Rural China*, 208–20.

10In one case from Taihu county, Anhui, in 1793, "reporting happiness" was but one step in the completion of a larger swindle. A medical practitioner named Cheng Cangyu contracted to acquire a *jiansheng* license for the son of a tribute student (*gongsheng*), with 80 ounces of silver payable on delivery of the provincial license and another 55 ounces when formal notification came from Beijing. Cheng deceived the man with a counterfeit license, collecting the first 80 ounces, and then sent a phony messenger to his home to announce that the title had been confirmed. The unsuspecting victim tipped the messenger 400 *wen*, and soon thereafter paid Cheng the remaining 55 ounces of silver. XKQT, JQ 2.5.21 (*juan* 229, *yiban*).

11Aged or senior farmers (*laonong*): This referred to an institution

begun in the 1720s, in which every three years each county and department magistrate was to recommend an elderly farmer with a reputation for diligence to be granted the title "agricultural official" (*nongguan*) and the hat knob of an eighth-rank official. Hsiao, *Rural China*, 207–8, 625n133.

12Village elders (*qilao*): This, too, was an official designation, for government-appointed rural leaders. According to Qing regulations, "Where [village elders] are to be appointed, these shall be selected from virtuous elderly persons who are respected by their fellow inhabitants and who live in the same rural areas . . . to influence the people and improve [customs]." Quotation slightly modified from Hsiao, *Rural China*, 553, translating from the *Lüli bianlan* and *Qing tongkao*. See also Jones, *Great Qing Code*, Article 83.2.

13LFZZ 1400-006 (QL 31.5.18). In all of the forgery and impersonation records I have encountered in my research, this widow was the sole female target. Her name was Li, and she was defrauded of 200 cash.

14The Beijing Gazette (*Jingbao*) or courier news (*tangbao*) was a regular official newsletter containing copies of edicts and selected memorials. It was published by provincial superintendents of courier posts for distribution to officials in their respective provinces. Fairbank and Teng, "On the Transmission of Ch'ing Documents," 36.

15XKTZ 13997-007 and LFZZ 1409-035, both dated QL 38.5.26. For other "good news" cases, see XKWJ, QL 31.12.4 (*juan* 9923); XKQT, JQ 2.5.21 (*juan* 229, *yiban*); GZDJQ, 43: 236–39 (JQ 19.11.20); and XKTZ 11385-009 (DG 19.5.8).

16*GZDYZ*, 3: 223 (YZ 2.9.21).

17JJD 11869 (QL 35.4.10 [actually 35.4.16]).

18XKWJ, QL 21.9.15 (*juan* 9874).

19NGXF 2341-6 (YZ 8.2.21), 2386-10 (YZ 8, no month or day).

20XKQT, QL 1.7.19 (*juan* 307).

21JJD 9907 (QL 27.5.15), LFZZ 1391-043 (QL 27.6.24), NGDK 078282 (QL 27.7.7), and LFZZ 1295-039 (QL 27.9.26). Most of the duped purchasers never got around to applying for the actual inheritance, but one man from Min County did so, and the governor approved his application without detecting the forgery, enabling him to draw a salary (*shiliang*).

22JJD 46518 (QL 55.12.17 rescript). As part of the coastal defense policies, fishing boats were not permitted to leave the harbor for offshore waters. The frauds put out the word that a new policy had been enacted, and offered to help fishermen acquire their licenses for 460 *wen* each.

23Each province (or pair of provinces, for Hubei-Hunan and Shaanxi-Gansu) had two superintendents of courier posts (*titang*), one stationed in Beijing and one in the provincial capital. Typically metropolitan military graduates (*wu jinshi*) recommended by the governor or governor-general and subordinate to the Board of War, they were responsible for dispatching central government documents to the provinces and provincial government documents to Beijing. See Fairbank and Teng, "On the Transmission of Ch'ing Documents," 35–36.

24XKTZ 11385-009 (DG 19.5.8).

25LFZZ 1397-013 (QL 30.3, no day); LFZZ 1447-027 (QL 59.11.21 rescript).

26On the second Jinchuan ("Golden Stream") war (1771–76), in which Qing armies were finally able to subdue the Tibetan Khamba people of western Sichuan, see *ECCP*, 1: 7–8; Woodside, "The Ch'ienlung Reign," 260–63; and *Qingdai quanshi*, 4: 341–55.

27*Qingdai Baxian Qianlong*, SF 6-1-1256 (*quanzong* 173, reel 7, QL 41.9.30). It got him nowhere. He was arrested soon after setting out from Chongqing.

28LFZZ 1380-030 (QL 9.7.9), case 10; LFZZ (QL 18.12.21), reel 95, frames 2924–27.

29XKWJ, JQ 7.10.29 (*juan* 10028).

30The blue plume (*lanling*) was worn by junior-ranked imperial bodyguards and conferred on meritorious officials of rank six and below. On the conferral of hat feathers or plumes as marks of special honor, see Brunnert and Hagelstrom, *Present Day Political Organization of China*, nos. 950 to 950B.

31LFZZ 1447-027 (QL 59.11.21 rescript).

32JJD 37582 (QL 40.9.9). For a similar case involving a mercenary in the war to suppress the White Lotus Rebellion, see XKQT, JQ 5.*r*4.10 (*juan* 226). In the latter case the motive was money, the fake promotion being a means to swindle "congratulations gifts" (*heli*) from relatives and friends.

33*GZDQL*, 21: 368–71 (QL 29.5.2); LFZZ 1396-027 (QL 29, no month or day), reel 96, frames 1621–23.

34For background on the use of horizontal tablets as imperial gifts or bestowals during the Qing period, see Hu, "Cong Qing gong dang'an tan Qing di yuci Liuqiu guowang bian'e," 1297–1306.

35*GZDQL*, 17: 244; LFZZ 1380-030 (QL 9.7.9).

36JJD 17059 (QL 36.1.23). None of these claims was outlandish in and of itself. On imperial rewards, typically silk hunting pouches (*hebao*) and bolts of brocade, for the presentation of poetry during the Qianlong emperor's southern tours, see Michael Chang, *A Court on Horseback*, 265–71. The imperial benevolence also

included promotions and forgiveness of administrative sanctions for officials whose transgressions were not too serious. See, for example, *Nanxun shengdian, juan* 70.

37XKQT, QL 1.9.4 (*juan* 303, *yiban*). A similar case occurred in Tai Department, Jiangsu in 1765, when a dismissed yamen clerk drew up an anonymous sixteen-point accusation against the department vice-magistrate and sent it to prefectural authorities. He used an official envelope, bearing the department magistrate's seal, which he had discovered at a friend's house. Thus, the missive had the appearance of a report from the magistrate to his superior. XKWJ, QL 30.10.15 (*juan* 9923).

38LFZZ 1406–22 (QL 33.6.3). The cult of Confucius (Kong Qiu, 551–479 BCE) was partly articulated through heritable honors and privileges bestowed upon the sage's direct descendants, the Kongs of Qufu. The senior male descendant, invested as the Duke for Fulfilling the Sage (Yansheng Gong), presided over a huge estate, wielded an official seal, and, until 1756, had the authority to nominate each new magistrate of Qufu County. Wilson, "Ritualizing Confucius/Kongzi," 61–67; and Lamberton, "The Kongs of Qufu," 317–24. On the dukes' waning political influence in the early nineteenth century, see Agnew, "Bureaucrats, Sectarians, and the Descendants of Confucius."

39LFZZ 1406–22 (QL 33.6.3).

40In many locales it was believed that within those walls the seals were guarded by fox spirits, whom officials ignored at their peril. Kang, *The Cult of the Fox*, 185–89.

41XKQT, QL 1.7.29 (*juan* 307). One must wonder what yamen staff thought when they observed that a critical square of paper had been torn from a notice board.

42XKWJ, JQ 7.10.29 (*juan* 10028).

43NGXF 2379-7 (QL 1, no month or day), reel 43, frames 2934–57; XKQT, JQ 5.*r*4.10 (*juan* 226). See also XKTZ 14115-003 (QL 16.6.13) and XKWJ, QL 30.10.15 (*juan* 9923).

44The door placard, issued by the local magistrate, was a household registration device in the *baojia* neighborhood surveillance system. Ch'ü, *Local* Government, 150, 152–53.

45LFZZ 1447-027 (QL 59.11.21 rescript).

46Yunlu et al., QL 6.9.25 (in Lü, "Qianlong liunian"); NGDK 22130 (QL 7.11.11[2]). The sutra was a gift from one of Hongzhou's eunuchs, whose brother had lived in Wang's home.

47XKTZ 13597-001 (QL 5.5.11). Successive patriarchs, officially recognized by the court, lived on Tiger Mountain in Guixi County, Jiangxi. Brunnert and Hagelstrom, *Present Day Political Organization of China*, no. 573B.

48XKQT, QL 1.8.28 (*juan* 321). Production and promulgation of the official calendar were jealously protected imperial prerogatives. The calendar for the coming year was prepared by the Astronomical Bureau and presented for distribution in the tenth month of the current year. Smith, *Chinese Almanacs*, 1–10; Smith, *Fortune-tellers and Philosophers*, 74-75; and *HDSL, juan* 315.

49JJD 45768 (QL 55.10.20).

50XKTZ 14115-003 (QL 16.6.13).

51GZDJQ, 14: 13–15 (JQ 6.8.26).

52XKQT, JQ 2.5.21 (*juan* 229, *yiban*). Zhao Dean used the same ploy in 1729. NGXF 2341-6 (YZ 8.2.21), 2386-10 (YZ 8, no month or day).

53One may well ask: are such doctoring cases so few because it was difficult and seldom attempted, or because it was fairly easy, and altered originals tended to slip through undetected?

54LFZZ 1406-22 (QL 33.6.3).

55XKQT, JQ 1.8.19 (*juan* 214).

56Feng Zishi, operating in Hunan, got *maotouzhi* from an associate who had access to bookshops in the Liulichang district of Beijing. XKQT, QL 1.9.4 (*juan* 318). On the bookstores and other shops in Liulichang during the Qing period, see Sun Dianqi, *Liulichang xiaozhi*.

57LFZZ (QL 18.12.21), reel 95, frames 2924-2927; LFZZ 1391-005 (QL 26.5.28); JJD 12274 (QL 35.7.2); LFZZ 0637-059 (QL 47.9.7 rescript); LFZZ 1445-017 (QL 58.9.12); XKWJ, JQ 7.10.29 (*juan* 10028). I am grateful to Professor Chuang Chi-fa for alerting me to the presence of tofu in the palace archives.

58Beeswax: NGXF 2379-7 (QL 1, no month or day), reel 43, frames 2934–57; and XKTZ 13597-001 (QL 5.5.11). On turnip (*da luobo*), see XKQT, QL 1.4.6 (*juan* 320). On yam (*shuling*), see XKQT, QL 1.11.11 (*juan* 295).

59XKTZ 14115-003 (QL 16.6.13).

60LFZZ 1396-027 (QL 29, no month or day), reel 96, frames 1621–23.

61See, for example, cases XKWJ, QL 21.9.15 (*juan* 9874); XKWJ, QL 40.3.5 (*juan* 9977); JJD 45616 (QL 55.9.2).

62See, for example, the case of Lin Asi, the proxy tax remitter. XKQT, QL 1.7.29 (*juan* 307).

63NGXF 2379-7 (QL 1, no month or day), reel 43, frames 2934–57.

64Confession of Chen Jishu in Yunlu et al., QL 6.9.25 (in Lü, “Qianlong liunian”), p. 21.

65XKTZ 14115-003 (QL 16.6.13).

66XKTZ 13997-007 and LFZZ 1409-035, both dated QL 38.5.26.

67XKQT, QL 1.11.11 (*juan* 295).

68XKWJ, JQ 7.10.29 (*juan* 10028).

69JJD 45768 (QL 55.10.20).

70XKWJ, QL 60.*r*2.20 (*juan* 10021). When the county magistrate visited the site, he found an empty hut in a remote area with no neighbors.

71XKQT, JQ 2.5.21 (*juan* 229, *yiban*).

72On yamen procedures for endorsing documents, see Ch'ü, *Local Government*, 78–79, 249–50; Cai, *Qingdai zhouxian gushi*, 44–47; and *Qingdai wenshu*, 218–19, 226.

73Sun Weizu describes the evolution, spurred by literati demand, from craftsmanship to artistry in the production of some seals, and the simultaneous emergence of "scholar" (*wenren*) engravers socially distinct from professional seal-carving craftsmen. Sun Weizu, *Zhongguo yinzhang*, 267–72; Sun Weizu, *History and Art of Chinese Seals*, 359–65.

74Kuo, *Word as Image*, 30–31; Sun Weizu, *Zhongguo yinzhang*, chapter 7; Sun Weizu, *History and Art of Chinese Seals*, chapter 7.

75Sun Weizu, *Zhongguo yinzhang*, 267; Sun Weizu, *History and Art of Chinese Seals*, 359.

76See, for example, LFZZ 2433-22 (JQ 8.4.29); JJD 12274 (QL 35.7.2).

77Roger Greatrex has noted an even more complex division of labor in coin counterfeiting cases. Greatrex, "Layers of Deception," 317.

78LFZZ 1397-013 (QL 30.3, no day).

79XKWJ, QL 31.12.4 (*juan* 9923).

80Ibid.

81XKQT, QL 1.8.28 (*juan* 321).

82Fuheng (d. 1770), patriarch of the illustrious Fucaclan of generals, officials, and imperial inlaws, had held high posts at the board since 1742 and been elevated to a duke in 1749. *ECCP*, 1: 252–53.

83LFZZ 1397-013 (QL 30.3, no day). Perhaps the engravers were so obliging because, as the resourceful Cai may have known, Fuheng had a house in that very neighborhood, the one to which Xia Yinglong (the infamous "Fu Tianbao") would send a letter in 1786.

84GZDJQ, 14: 13–15 (JQ 6.8.26).

85JJD 44705 (QL 55.6.8).

86XKTZ 13997-007 and LFZZ 1409-035, both dated QL 38.5.26.

87From the governor-general down to the district magistrate, the various offices of provincial government acted as nodes in the bureaucratic hierarchy. Connecting them to each other and to the dynastic capital was a vast postal relay network comprising, in China proper, between 800 and 1800 main stations (*yi*) for rapid transmission of official documents on horseback or comparable

conveyance, and a larger number of smaller stations (*pu*) for foot couriers. The main stations, typically 100 *li* (about thirty miles) apart, were under the control of the Board of War and manned by soldiers. The *pu*, from ten to thirty *li* (that is, up to ten miles) apart, were controlled by local authorities and employed both soldiers and civilian couriers. Fairbank and Teng, "On the Transmission of Ch'ing Documents," 15–18.

88NGDK 60435 (SZ 2.12, no day); *GZDYZ*, 15: 265-66 (YZ 7.12.9); *YZHW*, 25: 604–5 (YZ 11.12.12); Yunlu et al., QL 6.9.25 (in Lü, "Qianlong liunian"); and LFZZ 1386-033 (QL 20.6.22).

89For greater detail on tax collection and delivery practices, see Yeh-chien Wang, *Land Taxation in Imperial China*, 39–46; and Huaiyin Li, *Village Governance in North China*, 42–44.

90Ch'ü, *Local Government*, 187, 333n137; Yeh-chien Wang, *Land Taxation in Imperial China*, 41, 45–46.

91Hsiao, *Rural China*, 205–20; Sommer, *Sex, Law, and Society*, 169–70; Theiss, *Disgraceful Matters*, 25–38.

92JJD 46518 (QL 55.12.17 rescript); JJD 44705 (QL 55.6.8); and LFZZ 1442-18 (QL 56.9.10).

93On piracy in this period, see Antony, *Like Froth Floating on the Sea*.

94On the emergence of Amoy as a major commercial port, see Ng, *Trade and Society*.

95XKQT, QL 1.9.4 (*juan* 303, *yiban*).

96XKQT, QL 1.9.4 (*juan* 318).

97Information on this case comes from a lengthy memorial of 1736. XKWJ, QL 1.9.4 (*juan* 9776).

98The commissioner, Bai Zhongshan, prefaced his inquiry with the observation that opens this chapter: "Incoming and outgoing documents depend entirely on their seals for validation." He suspected forgery and wanted to verify the seal but had nothing to compare it to, as his yamen had no other documents bearing the ducal stamp.

99On evidential scholarship's influence on seal-script calligraphy and the study of seals, see Kuo, *Word as Image*, 20–21, 31, 53–57.

100XKWJ, QL 1, no month or day (*juan* 9973). Though filed in the archive under the year QL 1 (1736), this undated memorial must have been submitted sometime in the latter half of YZ 13 (1735).

101 XKWJ, QL 1.9.4 (*juan* 9776).

102 XKWJ, QL 60.*r*2.20 (*juan* 10021).

103 LFZZ 1447-027 (QL 59.11.21 rescript).

104 LFZZ 0637-059 (QL 47.9.7 rescript); Gongzhongdang zadang 409000415 [QL 47.9.7 rescript].

105 XKQT, QL 1.9.4 (*juan* 318); XKWJ, QL 1, no month or day (*juan* 9973).

106 XKQT, QL 1.9.4 (*juan* 303, *yiban*).
107 LFZZ 1391-043 (QL 27.6.24). Qiu took the document home and touched it up to make it look old, after which Gao accepted it and then sold it to an unsuspecting victim.
108 LFZZ 1445-017 (QL 58.9.12).
109 XKQT, QL 1.9.4 (*juan* 318); XKWJ, QL 1, no month or day (*juan* 9973).
110 *YZHW*, 25: 604–5 (YZ 11.12.12); *GZDYZ*, 22: 437–38 (YZ 11.12.12).
111 JJD 2808 (QL 13.*r*7.20), 3442 (QL 13.9.28). Such purchases were the responsibility of provincial governors and handled through the Board of Works. Lan, "Ming Qing shiqi de huangmu caiban," 88.
112 XKTZ 13997-007 and LFZZ 1409-035 (both dated QL 38.5.26).
113 JJD 11869 (QL 35.4.10 [actually 35.4.16]).
114 LFZZ 1417-003 (QL 40, no month or day; actually QL 36 [1771]).
115 This was a legal conception as well. A note in an influential Qing legal commentary observed, "The various yamen have all been conferred seals [*yin*], used to convey trustworthiness [*chuanxin*] in the four directions, and thus they are called stamping credentials [*yinxin*]." Shen, comp., *Da Qing lü jizhu*, 2: 895.

Epigraph: XKWJ, QL 60.*r*2.20 (*juan* 10021).

1The standard work on the subject remains Xu Daling's *Qingdai juanna zhidu*. See also Kondō, "Shindai no ennō to kanryo shakai no shūmatsu"; and Chen Kuanqiang, "Qingdai juanna zhidu." For a useful overview of the scholarship, see Lawrence Zhang, "Power for a Price," 12–17.

2See the work of Wu Yue, including "Qingdai baojuan yanjiu" and, most recently, *Chūgoku no ennō seido to shakai*; Kaske, "Fund-Raising Wars"; and Lawrence Zhang, "Power for a Price."

3Xu, *Qingdai juanna zhidu*, 1–12, 23.

4Ibid., 13–21, 77; Wu Yue, "Qingdai baojuan yanjiu," 5–7.

5Xu, *Qingdai juanna zhidu*, 82–92; Wu Yue, *Chūgoku no ennō seido to shakai*, chapters 5 and 6.

6Tang Xianglong, "Daoguangchao juanjian zhi tongji," 35 (table), 44 (appended table 2).

7Ibid., 33; Xu, *Qingdai juanna zhidu*, 55, 85–86.

8Wu Yue, "Qingdai baojuan yanjiu," 7–9; Xu, *Qingdai juanna zhidu*, 93–94.

9Wu Yue, "Qingdai baojuan yanjiu," 9–13; Chen Kuanqiang, "Qingdai juanna zhidu," 81b.

10*Qingdai liubu chengyu cidian*, 224; E-tu Zen Sun, *Ch'ing Administrative Terms*, no. 1285; Liu Yonghua, "Ming Qing shiqi de lisheng," 245, 252–54.

11JJD 6377 (QL 16.1.23 rescript); *GZDQL*, 63: 715–19 (QL 52.3.23); Liu Yonghua, "Ming Qing shiqi de lisheng," 251.

12For examples see XKWJ, QL 1.9.4 (*juan* 9776); *QSL*, 14: 45 (*Gaozong shilu, juan* 384), QL 16.3.1 (*wuxu*) and 18: 486–87 (*Gaozong shilu, juan* 773), QL 31.11.20 (*bingxu*); JJD 27629–1 (QL 45.7.13 rescript); *GZDQL*, 63: 715–19 (QL 52.3.23).

13Xu, *Qingdai juanna zhidu*, 145; *Qingshi biannian*, 6: 377–422 passim. For a fuller treatment from the perspectives of state-making and commercialization, see Akcetin, "Corruption at the Frontier."

14Kaske, "Metropolitan Clerks and Venality in Qing China"; Fang, "Daoguang shinian sizao jiazhao an"; and Fang, "Daoguang shinian sizao jiazhao an gaishu."

15The Translators Institute (Siyi Guan) was a metropolitan agency under the Hanlin Academy, responsible for translating communications from foreign states. Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, no. 5656; *Zhongguo guanzhi dacidian*, 1: 454.

16*GZDYZ*, 27: 830–32. The memorial is undated, but textual evidence indicates that Vice-Minister Miao Yuan (d. 1729) submitted it at the very end of 1726 or during the first six months of 1727.

17Xu, *Qingdai juanna zhidu*, 143–44.

18Wu Yue, “Qingdai baojuan yanjiu,” 19.

19For an examination of lawsuits occasioned by such purchases, see Mio, “Maojuan maokao susong.”

20Information on this case comes from a routine memorial submitted by Sichuan governor Wang Jinghao in 1726. NGXF 2329-3 (YZ 3.12.20).

21In 1720, Qing armies drove the Eleuths from Tibet and occupied Lhasa. *Qingdai quanshi*, 3: 238–41; *ECCP*, 2: 907–8.

22Pingyi was in Qujing prefecture, near the Guizhou border.

23LFZZ 0637-059 (QL 47.8, no day). Ironically, Luo had tried to cheat the Gansu grain contribution program, which was itself a fraud of unprecedented scale.

24The Gansu contributions ran from May 1774 to October 1781. *Qingshi biannian*, 6: 196, 385.

25JJD 6377 (QL 16.1.23 rescript).

26See Lui, *The Hanlin Academy*, 1, 24–7, 29–36, 168–69.

27Ibid., 11–15. Erudites of the Five Classics were most commonly associated with the Directorate of Education, but the title also appeared in the Hanlin Academy and was bestowed in perpetuity on the eldest direct male descendants of major Confucian philosophers, exegetical masters, and other illustrious personages. Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, no. 7752; Brunnert and Hagelstrom, *Present Day Political Organization of China*, no. 944A.

28In 1645, the Qing court conferred a perpetually heritable Hanlin erudite title on Zhong You’s sixty-first generation descendant. *Qingshi gao*, 1: 893 (*juan* 115, p. 3321); Brunnert and Hagelstrom, *Present Day Political Organization of China*, no. 944A.

29Ho, *The Ladder of Success*, 34; Chung-li Chang, *The Chinese Gentry*, 5, 33–40.

30XKWJ, QL 1.9.4 (*juan* 9776).

31Liu Yonghua, “Ming Qing shiqi de lisheng,” 251; XKWJ, QL 1.9.4 (*juan* 9776); JJD 6377 (QL 16.1.23 rescript).

32JJD 27629-1 (QL 45.7.13 rescript). Li knew that apprenticeships were open only to descendants of the Zhou house, but he had noticed that the genealogy contained more than one surname. Sensing a profit-making opportunity, he began spreading word that *anyone* could acquire the title by making a contribution. Conveniently, he himself was willing to serve as proxy purchaser.

33Liu Yonghua, “Ming Qing shiqi de lisheng,” 251–55.

34David Johnson notes that *lisheng* “were employed all over China to lead non-Buddhist, non-Daoist family and communal rituals.” Liu Yonghua goes further (in a different direction), not only distinguishing the *lisheng* from Buddhist and Daoist specialists but also suggesting that their role in local Confucian sacrifices

uniquely positioned them to facilitate "the penetration of court ritual into popular society." David Johnson, *Spectacle and Sacrifice*, 89, 312–15; Liu Yonghua, "Ming Qing shiqi de lisheng," 256.

35On the various challenges involved at the capital and along the way from the provinces, see Wu Yue, "Qingdai baojuan yanjiu," 18, 22.

36XKWJ, QL 1, no month or day (*juan* 9773).

37LFZZ 0637-059 (QL 47.8, no day). On the "family investment strategy" of purchasing titles for boys and young men, see Lawrence Zhang, "Power for a Price," 118, 136–42, 152.

38XKWJ, QL 60.*r*2.20 (*juan* 10021).

39XKQT, JQ 1.8.19 (*juan* 214).

40XKWJ, QL 1.9.4 (*juan* 9776). The memorial variously identifies Kong as Mount Ni Instructor (Nishan xuelu) and Ducal Establishment Instructor (Yansheng Gongfu xuelu), which suggests that he held his title at either the Confucian academy (*Nishan shuyuan*) on Mount Ni, southeast of Qufu, or the School of the Four Sage Clans (Sishi Xue) on the Kong lineage estate. Describing the latter school, Hucker translated *xuelu* as "instructor third class." In the context of the Imperial College, Brunnert and Hagelstrom rendered it "sub-registrar." Kong Fanyin, *Qufu de lishi mingren yu wenwu*, 298–300; Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, no. 5767; *Hanyu dacidian*, 3: 573 and 4: 10; Brunnert and Hagelstrom, *Present Day Political Organization of China*, no. 412A.

41XKWJ, QL 1.9.4 (*juan* 9776). Zhong Xigong became the go-between for seven purchasers, whose licenses would be the work of Kong Chuanfang's kinsman Kong Chuanyi, the talented forger of ducal communications.

42LFZZ 0637-059 (QL 47.8, no day).

43XKQT, JQ 1.8.19 (*juan* 214).

44XKWJ, QL 1, no month or day (*juan* 9773).

45XKWJ, QL 60.*r*2.20 (*juan* 10021).

46XKQT, QL 1.9.4 (*juan* 318).

47XKWJ, QL 60.*r*2.20 (*juan* 10021).

48Wu Yue, "Qingdai baojuan yanjiu," 17–19. Wu has also shown the significance of the contributions business in the rising fortunes of the celebrated Shanxi remittance banks beginning in the Daoguang era. Wu Yue, *Chūgoku no ennō seido to shakai*, chapter 8.

49Wu Yue, "Qingdai baojuan yanjiu," 22–23, and *Chūgoku no ennō seido to shakai*, 117–19.

50LFZZ 0637-059 (QL 47.8, no day).

51XKWJ, QL 60.*r*2.20 (*juan* 10021).

52*QSL*, 10: 1165 ("Gaozong shilu," *juan* 151), QL 6.9.24, *bingxu*; 14: 45 (*Gaozong shilu, juan* 384), QL 16.3.1, *wuxu*; 18: 486 (*Gaozong shilu, juan* 773), QL 31.11.5, *bingxu*; 34: 1027 (*Xuanzong shilu, juan* 121), DG 7.7.3, *bingwu*; and 34: 1069 (*Xuanzong shilu, juan* 124), DG 7.8.18, *xinmao*. See also *GZDQL*, 63: 715–19 (QL 52.3.23).

53JJD 6377 (QL 16.1.23 rescript).

54Indeed, three accessories in a 1783 case were sentenced by analogy to a substatute under the law on proxy tax remittance. *GZDQL*, 57: 159–62 (QL 48.8.18); *DLCY*, 2: 328–29, Article 122-01.

55*DLCY*, 2: 207; Jones, *Great Qing Code*, 89–90; *Qinding hubu zeli*, 98:41. The term "written imperial order" referred to a prohibition that had come into effect via direct imperial utterance rather than as the result of official petition.

56*GZDQL*, 68: 237–39 (QL 53.5.10).

57*QSL*, 25: 569–70 (*Gaozong shilu, juan* 1305), QL 53.5.29, *gengyin*.

58*QSL*, 25: 610 (*Gaozong shilu, juan* 1307), QL 53.6.29, *gengshen*.

59Wu Yue, "Qingdai baojuan yanjiu," 19.

60See chapter 7 below.

61XKQT, QL 1.9.4 (*juan* 318).

62XKQT, JQ 2.5.21 (*juan* 229, *yiban*). The sentence was approved.

63XKWJ, QL 1, no month or day (*juan* 9773).

64XKQT, QL 1.9.4 (*juan* 318).

65XKWJ, QL 60.*r*2.20 (*juan* 10021).

66On the growing official sympathy for merchants in mid-Qing legal disputes, see Chiu, "The Discourse on Insolvency and Negligence."

67LFZZ 0637-059 (QL 47.8, no day).

68*GZDQL*, 68: 237–39 (QL 53.5.10).

69*GZDQL*, 57: 159–62 (QL 48.8.18). The magnanimity extended to a Beijing silver shop proprietor Li had entrusted to pick up three licenses at the Board of Revenue; he, too, was released without punishment.

70XKWJ, QL 60.*r*2.20 (*juan* 10021); XKQT, JQ 1.8.19 (*juan* 214); XKQT, JQ 2.5.21 (*juan* 229, *yiban*).

71XKWJ, QL 60.*r*2.20 (*juan* 10021).

72GZDJQ, 30: 601–2 (JQ 13.8.6); "Gongzhongdang Daoguangchao zouzhe", 4: 539–47 (DG 18.2.1).

73XKWJ, QL 1.9.4 (*juan* 9776); JJD 27629-1 (QL 45.7.13 rescript); *GZDQL*, 63: 715–19 (QL 52.3.23). The erudite was Dongye Chongqiao, descendant of the Duke of Zhou.

74Xu, *Qingdai juanna zhidu*, 25, 35–36, 37, 40.

75Rowe, *Chen Hongmou and Elite Consciousness*, 255–59.

76Ibid., 296, quoting an edict of March 7, 1738 (QL 3.1.7). The

translation is Professor Rowe's.

1By comparison, figures in the *Collected Statutes* of 1899 indicate that twenty percent of all offenses in the Qing code (813 of a total of 3,987) were punishable by death. *Da Qing huidian*, 54:1a–b, cited in Bodde and Morris, *Law in Imperial China*, 103–4.

2The crime fell under the sixth abomination, "Great Lack of Respect" or, in Wallace Johnson's rendition, "great irreverence" (*da bujing*). *DLCY*, 2: 17 (Article 2); Jones, *Great Qing Code*, 35; Wallace Johnson, *T'ang Code*, 1: 69.

3See Liu Shao's preface to the Wei code (ca. 230), preserved in the legal treatise of the Jin (265–419) dynastic history. *Xin jiaoben Jinshu*, 923-24 (*juan* 30), in the Scripta Sinica Database, http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ihp/hanji.htm (accessed May 21, 2015). See also Qiu, ed., *Lidai xingfazhi*, 156.

4The other three were Bribery (Qingqiu), "Water and Fire" (Shuihuo), and Destruction (Huiwang). *Xin jiaoben Jinshu*, 927 (*juan* 30), in the Scripta Sinica Database, http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ihp/hanji.htm (accessed May 21, 2015).

5*Xin jiaoben Suishu*, 697–98, 705, 707 (*juan* 25), in the Scripta Sinica Database, http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ihp/hanji.htm (accessed May 21, 2015). According to an authoritative eighteenth-century source, the Liang code of 503 used a different version of the character *wei*, minus the "human" radical (which would have rendered it "deceptive acts"), and the Northern Qi code of 564 used *Zhaqi* ("Deception" or "Deceptions"). Shen, *Da Qing lü jizhu*, 2: 887.

6*Xin jiaoben Suishu*, 712, 716–17 (*juan* 25); *Xin jiaoben Jiu Tangshu*, 2136 (*juan* 50); and *Xin jiaoben Xin Tangshu*, 1407 (*juan 56*), all in the Scripta Sinica Database, http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ihp/hanji.htm (accessed May 21, 2015).

7Wallace Johnson, *T'ang Code*, 2:419. In translating *zei* I have substituted "robbery" for Johnson's "violence."

8Hulsewé, *Remnants of Ch'in Law*, 135–36 (esp. Report D44) and 189 (Report E9); *Hanshu*, 4: 121 and 5: 148, respectively, cited in Hulsewé, *Remnants of Han Law*, 38.

9Whether Qin and Han laws were collected in formal "codes" at all remains an open question. Hulsewé, *Remnants of Han Law*, 26.

10Dai Yanhui, "Lun Tanglü Zhawei lü," 35.

11For the complete list and text, see Tanglü shuyi *jianjie*, 2: 1683–770 (*juan* 25); and Wallace Johnson, *T'ang Code*, 2: *xix–xx* and 419–455.

12Although the section heading was Zhawei, the *wei* statutes came first because they included the most serious offenses of all,

forgery and misuse of the emperor's seals. Tanglü shuyi *jianjie*, 2: 1683 (*juan* 25); Wallace Johnson, *T'ang Code*, 2: 419.

13Dai Yanhui, "Lun Tanglü Zhawei lü," 35. Article numbers follow Wallace Johnson's *T'ang Code*.

14Dai Yanhui, "Lun Tanglü Zhawei lü," 35–36.

15Ibid., 35.

16Ibid.

17See the statutes recorded in *Song xingtong*, 435–59 (*juan* 25).

18According to the dynastic history's legal treatise, the Jurchen Jin code was "really the Tang code" with modifications. *Xin jiaoben Jinshi*, 1024 (*juan* 45), in the Scripta Sinica Database, http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ihp/hanji.htm (accessed May 21, 2015).

19*Xin jiaoben Yuanshi*, 2667–70 (*juan* 105), in the Scripta Sinica Database, http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ihp/hanji.htm (accessed May 21, 2015). Forging money was, as we have seen, an ancient offense with ancient laws against it. Article 391 of the Tang code, "Illegal coining of money," fell under "Miscellaneous Articles." Wallace Johnson, *T'ang Code*, 2: 457–58.

20Another case precedent involved a man who abused commoners by pretending to be a relative and houseman (*sheren*) of a dignitary (*guishi*). *Da Yuan shengzheng guochao dianzhang*, 1: 698–702 and 2: 909–910.

21Bodde and Morris, *Law in Imperial China*, 58–60; Wallace Johnson, *T'ang Code*, 1: 39. The legal treatise of the *New Tang History* noted that the new code of 637 followed the twelve-chapter structure of the Sui code. *Xin jiaoben Xin Tangshu*, 1407 (*juan* 56), in the Scripta Sinica Database, http://hanchi.ihp.sinica.edu.tw/ihp/hanji.htm (accessed May 21, 2015).

22The Ming code contained an article on counterfeiting paper money that was rendered obsolete by the abandonment of paper currency in the early Qing. *Qingshi gao*, 2: 1110 (*juan* 142, p. 4184).

23Although successive editions followed the Ming code's form and the basic statutes were almost identical, the Qing code was not simply a copy of its predecessor. The number of substatutes increased tremendously over the course of the Qing dynasty, and they were subject to frequent systematic revision, particularly in the eighteenth century. For an overview of this history see Zheng, "Pursuing Perfection."

24*DLCY*, 1: 115–22; *Jones, Great Qing Code*, xxi–xxx.

25Article numbers follow those in the text on which Jones based his translation, namely, Huang Tsing-chia's widely used typeset edition of Xue Yunsheng's *Duli cunyi*. The numbers first appeared in Staunton's translation, the *Ta Tsing Leu Lee*, published in 1810.

26Two possible exceptions are “Fraudulently Inventing a Good Omen” and “Feigning Sickness, Death, or Injury to Avoid Tasks” (Articles 363 and 364 of the Qing code). Both involved deceptive reporting, however.

27One could argue that, following the apparent logic of the Ming reorganization, this article should have joined its cousin, false accusations (Article 336), in the code’s “procedure” or “accusations and suits” (Susong) section. The inclusion of “craftily enticing” in the Zhawei section probably stemmed from the fact that it involved both deception and invocation of state power for criminal ends.

28Jones, *Great Qing Code*, 339–40.

29*DLCY*, 5: 1056–60; Jones, *Great Qing Code*, 342.

30*DLCY*, 5: 1067–68; Jones, *Great Qing Code*, 344–45.

31*DLCY*, 5: 1071; Jones, *Great Qing Code*, 344–45.

32Huang Zhangjian, comp., *Mingdai lüli huibian*, 2: 930; *LLTK*, 945.

33Huang Zhangjian, *Mingdai lüli huibian*, 2: 931; *LLTK*, 946.

34On the official use of private commentaries, see Fu-mei Chang Chen, “The Influence of Shen Chih-chi’s *Chi-chu Commentary*”; and the collators’ preface to Shen’s *Da Qing lü jizhu*.

35*Da Ming lü jijie fuli*, 5: 1798–99.

36Shen, *Da Qing lü jizhu*, 2: 889 (upper commentary).

37*Da Ming lü jijie fuli*, 5: 1805.

38Shen, *Da Qing lü jizhu*, 2: 891 (general commentary).

39Lei, *Dulü suoyan*, 437; Shen, *Da Qing lü jizhu*, 2: 895 (general commentary). See also *Da Ming lü jijie fuli*, 5: 1811.

40Lei, *Dulü suoyan*, 439. The *Jijie fuli* commentary similarly stated: “The authority to mint cash comes from above. If it is privately minted, then it is stealing the imperial authority.” *Da Ming lü jijie fuli*, 5: 1818.

41Shen, *Da Qing lü jizhu*, 2: 899 (upper commentary).

42*Da Ming lü jijie fuli*, 5: 1821.

43Shen, *Da Qing lü jizhu*, 2: 904 (general commentary). See also Lei, *Dulü suoyan*, 442; and *Da Ming lü jijie fuli*, 5: 1826.

44*DLCY*, 5: 1056.

45*DLCY*, 5: 1053; Jones, *Great Qing Code*, 339.

46*DLCY*, 5: 1056. These distinctions would ultimately be carried over to the unrelated field of gambling. In 1738 the Qianlong emperor approved a new substatute reducing the penalty for those who made cards or dice for sale if they had not yet completed them or if the card designs were drawn rather than printed from blocks. *LLTK*, 972; *DLCY*, 5: 1102 (Article 378, Gambling, substatute 7).

47Lei, *Dulü suoyan*, 437; Shen, *Da Qing lü jizhu*, 2: 897; and *DLCY*, 5: 1057. Xue Yunsheng was quoting Shen Zhiqi, and Shen was

quoting an earlier commentary, the *Zhinan* (Guidebook).

48*DLCY*, 5: 1054 (substatute 355-02 and commentary).

49*DLCY*, 5: 1053.

50Wang Kentang, *Jianshi* (Notes and explanations), cited in *DLCY*, 5: 1057. The same calculations were at work in the later law on playing cards. Wu Tan (d. 1780), the compiler of the *Da Qing lüli tongkao*, commented that since it could take weeks or months to produce only one set of cards by drawing and the negative effects would not spread as widely as with multiple sets printed from blocks, the punishment should be slightly reduced. *LLTK*, 972.

51*DLCY*, 5: 1067–68 (Article 360, statutes 1 and 2, respectively).

52*DLCY*, 5: 1071 (Article 361, statute 2) and 1068–69 (substatutes 360-02 and 360-03).

53Bodde and Morris, *Law in Imperial China*, 32, 64–67.

54*LLTK*, 929. The original tracing sentence, permanent exile at a frontier garrison (some 300 miles closer), dated to the Ming and did not forbid pardons. Shen, *Da Qing lü jizhu*, 2: 897; *LLTK*, 930.

55*HDSL*, 9: 963 (*juan* 822).

56*LLTK*, 929–30; *HDSL*, 9: 962 (*juan* 822).

57Smith, *Chinese Almanacs*, 1–10.

58*LLTK*, 931.

59Ibid., 931; *HDSL*, 9: 963 (*juan* 822).

60*LLTK*, 931.

61The phrase "respectfully delivers the seasons to the people" (*jingshou renshi*), a conventional expression for distributing the official calendar, comes from the *Classic of Documents* (*Shujing*), Book of Tang, Canon of Yao. Legge, *The Shoo King*, 18.

62*LLTK*, 931. "Stems and branches" (*ganzhi*): the ten heavenly stems and twelve earthly branches, used to form sixty-year cycles and to mark years, months, days, and hours.

63Ibid., 931.

64*DLCY*, 5: 1060 (statute 359.3).

65*Wenxing tiaoli*, quoted in Lei, *Dulü suoyan*, 439; *Huang Ming tiaofa shi lei zuan*, 5: 708–9 (*juan* 42).

66*LLTK*, 935; *DLCY*, 5: 1064 (substatute 359-05).

67*LLTK*, 935.

68Ibid.

69*DLCY*, 5: 1060 (substatute 358-04).

70*DLCY*, 5: 1059 (substatute 358-03); *LLTK*, 930.

71*DLCY*, 5: 1059–60.

72*LLTK*, 942; *Yongzheng qijuzhu ce*, 3: 2046–47 (YZ 6.6.9); *HDSL*, 9: 978–79 (*juan* 824).

73*LLTK*, 942. In 1751 the emperor would order an even harsher penalty for the recidivist Shou Lunyuan, who posed as an

expectant Grand Canal official and fooled the Hunan provincial administration commissioner into issuing an order for local officials to cooperate with Shou's lumber acquisitions. *HDSL*, 9: 979 (*juan* 824); ZPZZ 0206-024 (QL 16.5.10).

74ZPZZ 0236-031 (QL 24.10.9).

75*QSL*, 16: 649–50 (*Gaozong shilu, juan* 597), QL 24.9.16, *guihai*; *HDSL*, 9: 979 (*juan* 824). Tong had already been dispatched to exile in Hubei when the death sentence came down. Officials arranged for a prompt execution there to prevent him catching wind of the new sentence and taking his own life on the road back to Zhejiang. ZPZZ 0236-031 (QL 24.10.9).

76Yang, ed., Chunqiu Zuo zhuan *zhu*, 2: 788.

77Legge, *Ch'un Ts'ew*, 344 (Duke of Cheng, second year). The brackets are Legge's.

78*Hanyu da cidian*, 3: 177.

79It is also noteworthy, in light of the abovementioned etymology of the compound *yinxin* for an official seal, that this passage used the word *xin* (confidence or belief) when referring to popular confidence in the state. Titles, seals, and ceremonial trappings of office all concerned the basic integrity and legitimacy of the state.

80*QSL*, 16: 652 (*Gaozong shilu, juan* 597), QL 24.9.18, *yichou*; *HDSL*, 9: 979–980 (*juan* 824).

81*QSL*, 16: 652 (*Gaozong shilu, juan* 597), QL 24.9.18, *yichou*; *HDSL*, 9: 980 (*juan* 824).

82*QSL*, 16: 653 (*Gaozong shilu, juan* 597), QL 24.9.18, *yichou*; *HDSL*, 9: 980 (*juan* 824).

83*Yijing*, "Qian," and the legal treatise of the *History of the [Former] Han Dynasty* (*Hanshu*, lüli zhi, *shang*), both quoted in *Hanyu da cidian*, 8: 114.

84*DLCY*, 5: 1069 (substatute 360-05); *LLTK*, 943.

85*DLCY*, 5: 1067, interlinear commentary on Article 360, statute 1.

86*LLTK*, 943; *DLCY*, 5: 1070.

87*LLTK*, 943; *DLCY*, 5: 1070.

88*LLTK*, 943; *DLCY*, 5: 1070, substatute 360-06. This and the previous substatute were combined in one (360-06) in 1809.

89All that remained of the 1727 substatute was a leniency provision for subofficial functionaries who turned themselves in. *LLTK*, 942; *DLCY*, 5: 1068 (substatute 360-01).

90Aggravating circumstances could shift a case to a different criminal category, such as Homicide or Article 358, "Counterfeiting seals, almanacs, and the like."

91Jones, *Great Qing Code*, 343–44; *DLCY*, 5: 1067–68; *LLTK*, 942. The translation is Jones's. Statute 1 (not translated here) covered offenses involving forged credentials, statute 2 those without.

92*DLCY*, 5: 1068; Huang Zhangjian, *Mingdai lüli huibian*, 2: 924; Xue Yunsheng, *Tang Ming lü hebian*, 663.
93Shen, *Da Qing lü jizhu*, 2: 904.
94Huang Zhangjian, *Mingdai lüli huibian*, 2: 930–31; Shen, *Da Qing lü jizhu*, 2: 905.
95Shen, *Da Qing lü jizhu*, 2: 905; *LLTK*, 946.
96*DLCY*, 5: 1072.
97Hucker, *Dictionary of Official Titles*, no. 1127. For a brief overview of this notorious "depot and guards" establishment, including reference to hoodlums posing as police agents, see Han and Cao, "Mingdai de tewu jiguan: changwei," 248–51.
98*LLTK*, 946; *DLCY*, 5: 1072.
99*QSL*, 16: 481 (*Gaozong shilu, juan* 584), QL 24.4.11, *xinyou*; ZPZZ, *falü, qita*, QL 24.3.3 (*juan* 55, *bao* 20).
100 For Article 269 (Non-manifest theft), see Jones, *Great Qing Code*, 251–52; *DLCY*, 3: 649–72. For specific correspondences of punishments to amounts in silver, see *LLTK*, 52.
101 *DLCY*, 5: 1032–33, Article 344-03.
102 *DLCY*, 5: 1072.
103 Chu, "Chen xingming li'an liutiao shu," 11b–12.
104 *HDSL*, 9: 981–82 (*juan* 824). The additions of 1801 (1804, according to the *Duli cunyi*) also introduced some confusion by varying punishments in relation to two different standards, the use of a fake warrant and the amount of money obtained. However, the verminous underlings scale remained. *DLCY*, 5: 1072–73.
105 It is here, in the area of law, that the similarities between Chinese and English police impersonation give way to a striking difference. Official corruption was certainly on the books and in the courtrooms of eighteenth-century England, but official impersonation, which evidence suggests was becoming increasingly common, met with what Jennine Hurl-Eamon characterizes as legislative "apathy." English law betrayed no systematic effort to address the problem, and phony constables were subject to light punishments. "Thus, while the courts were interested in prohibiting corruption among their officers, the impostures that we are examining did not receive any special attention or legislation." Hurl-Eamon, "The Westminster Impostors," 471–74. In this regard, then, the early modern English state guarded local policing prerogatives far less jealously than its counterpart in China.

CONCLUSION

1Kuhn, *Soulstealers*, 229–30.
2Ibid., 230.

3A decree of 1645 required that Chinese males adopt the Manchu hairstyle of shaved forehead with a queue hanging down the back. The decree was enforced throughout the Qing era. Kuhn, *Soulstealers*, 53–55.

4For a matrix of "social-cultural groups" in late imperial China, accompanied by a comprehensive discussion of intertwining levels of literacy and social dominance or subordination, see David Johnson, "Communication, Class, and Consciousness," 55–67. For a taxonomy of literate village "specialists" in South China, see Hayes, "Specialists and Written Materials," 92–103. Hayes focuses on two main categories of specialists dealing with spiritual and social needs.

5Macauley, *Social Power and Legal Culture*, 10.

6The same could be said of contemporary China, even though, judging from news reports, in recent years it has seen no shortage of counterfeiting, document forgery, and imposture. If pressed to compare deceptions in the late imperial past with the post-Mao present, I would look to the institutional settings (the arenas for deception), distinguish between different types of fraud, and make no assumptions about historical continuity. If the Qing record calls to mind current events, I would posit that we perceive commonalities because there are certain parallels in the social and political arenas. Both periods are marked by extensive commercialization, with attendant opportunities for economic crime. Both also feature sprawling centralized government structures that still, even amidst rapid economic change, wield tremendous authority and command access to material resources and status. And in both societies there are large numbers of people struggling to find economic security and social status commensurate with their abilities.

7LFZZ 1211-040 (QL 56.10.1).

8Here we see local officials channeling offenses into lighter criminal categories. For a discussion of provincial governors' methods for preempting and resisting imperial pressure, see Kuhn, *Soulstealers*, 214–19.

9See for example Philip C. C. Huang, *Civil Justice in China*, chapters 6 and 7; and Macauley, *Social Power and Legal Culture*.

10In effect, many of these frauds were partaking in the "culture of the road into town" that Melissa Macauley describes in her analysis of litigation masters and the roads, towns, inns, and teahouses that connected them with customers. We might add to this culture the hospitality of strangers. Macauley, *Social Power and Legal Culture*, 121–27.

11LFZZ 0170-068 (QL 46.10.20).

12*GZDQL*, 24: 620 (QL 30.4.16).

13The yellow riding jacket was a mark of high distinction, conferred by the emperor as a reward for meritorious service. Brunnert and Hagelstrom, *Present Day Political Organization of China*, no. 947.

14LFZZ, reel 98, frames 1769–71 (QL 51.12.12), Liao Ke's deposition. Manchu city: The Manchus established banner garrisons at strategic points throughout the empire. "Part military bastion, part administrative center, and part ethnic ghetto, the Manchu city became the exclusive home of banner officers and soldiers, their families, and servants." Elliott, *The Manchu Way*, 93–94.

15Zhang Yingyu [fl. 1612], *Dupian xinshu*.

age 阿哥
baibu 白捕
baiyi 白役
bangyi 幫役
bao (bundle) 包
bao (seal) 寶
baojia 保甲
baolan 包攬
bazong 把總
bei pian wuiuan 被騙誤捐
bian'e 匾額
bianshi 匾式
biaopan 標判
bingtie 稟帖
bu zhiqing 不知情
buan benfen 不安本分
buban 捕班
bude tengnuo zuzhi 不得騰挪阻滯
Bufangshi, wo zi you jiuying 不防事, 我自有救應
buhaojian 不好見
bukuai 捕快
buyi 捕役
Buzhen chong buyi gan nazei ma 不真充 捕役敢拿賊嗎
Cai Qifeng 蔡起鳳
Cai Yuanqing 蔡元罄
Cao Bin 曹斌
chai 差
chaipiao 差票
chaiyi 差役
chaonao 吵鬧
Chen Dechang 陳德昌
Chen Deshi 陳得士
Chen Pei 陳配
Cheng Erzhong 程爾仲
cheng kong 乘空
Cheng Kui 程魁
chengwu pingshi 稱物 平施
chequding 硨磲頂
choufeng 抽豐

chuanxin 傳信
chuilu zhuan 垂露篆
chukou zhizhao 出口執照
cong 從
cong jiupin 從九品
cu tong wenmo 粗通文墨
da bujing 大不敬
Da Laoye 大老爺
dachen 大臣
dagan faii zhe 大干法紀者
daijuan 代捐
daishu 代書
dan (memo) 單
dan (picul) 石
Dang Linhan 黨林翰
dao guan shoulei 到官受累
Daolü 盜律
daren 大人
dianshi 典史
dingdai 頂戴
dingzi 頂子
Dongsi ertiao 東四二條
Dongye Chongqiao 東野崇鐈
duyi zhazang 蠹役詐贓
ewai 額外
fahui 法會
falü 法律
fan 煩
fanyin 番銀
fei kai fei xing 非楷非行
fei liangshan zhi bei 非良善之輩
fei meishi 非美事
feifan 匪犯
feilei 匪類
feitu 匪徒
Feng Zishi 馮子視
fengtiao 封條
fengtong 封筒
fengzhi 奉旨
Fofa sengbao 佛法僧寶

fu 符
Fu Tianbao 附天保
Fuweilie 傅惟烈
Fuyi quanshu 賦役全書
gan erzi 乾兒子
ganzhi 干支
gaoshi 告示
ge yamen renyi 各衙門人役
geyi 革役
gong 工
gongsheng 貢生
gongying 供應
guahao 掛號
guanfang 關防
guanggun 光棍
guangou 管勾
guishi 貴勢
guiyu nandun 鬼蜮難遁
guntu 棍徒
Guo Shichun 郭世純
Guo Wei 郭煒
guolu 過路
Guozi Jian 國子監
Guozi Xue 國子學
gushi 骨殖
haipa buguo 害怕不過
Han Yuanshuai 韓元帥
hanmo 翰墨
He Dixun 何蒂勳
hebao 荷包
heli 賀禮
hepian 嚇騙
hezha 嚇詐
hongbaoshi 紅寶石
honghei mao 紅黑帽
hou 侯
houbu 候補
houxuan 候選
Hua Wenzhao 華文昭

huahong qian 花紅錢
Huang Zhanyuan 黃占元
huangju 慌懼
huangling 黃綾
hufu 護符
huibi 廻避
Huimin 回民
huiti 彙題
huiwang 毀亡
huohao guigong 火耗歸公
Ji Xiangwan 季祥萬
jiagun 夾棍
jiamao 假冒
jian bing zhifang 見兵支放
jian zhao fuyin 見照付銀
jianfei yinhao 奸匪銀號
jiang 匠
Jiang Zheng 姜正
jiangun 奸棍
jiankuai 健快
jianmin (scoundrel or traitor) 奸民
jianmin (mean people) 賤民
jiansheng 監生
Jianshi 箋釋
jiantu 奸徒
jiao 繳
jiaozhu 叫住
jiaren 假人
jie 節
Jingbao 京報
jingli 經歷
jingli si 經歷司
jingshou renshi 敬授人時
jinshen 縉紳
jinshen lu 搢（縉）紳錄
jinyaode 緊要的
jiudie zhuanwen 九疊篆文
Jiufeng An 鷲峯庵
jiyan fangxing 即驗放行
ju shu chuanmiu 具屬舛繆

juan 卷
juanma shili 捐馬事例
juanna 捐納
juannafang 捐納房
juanzhi 捐職
Junjichu 軍機處
Junjidang 軍機檔
junwang 郡王
jupa 懼怕
kaihua 開花
kanhe 勘合
kanzi jiang 刊字匠
kemin 客民
kezi 刻字
kezi jiang 刻字匠
Kong Chuanfang 孔傳鈁
Kong Chuanyi 孔傳藝
kuaishou 快手
lai 賴
lanbaoshi 藍寶石
langei yinpiao 濫給印票
lanling 藍翎
lanqi toushui 攬契投稅
lanzhu 攬住
laonong 老農
Laoye 老爺
li (Chinese mile) 里
li (substatute) 例
Li Lianke 李連科
Li Minyong 黎民雍
Li Niangniang 李娘娘
Li Tingjian 李廷監
Li Yuan 李元
Liao Ke 廖珂
liaocao cuowu 潦草錯誤
liang 兩
Lin Asi 林阿四
Lin Jingnan 蘭景南
Lin Yiquan 林益全

Ling Zhougui 凌周桂
lingchi 凌遲
lingjian 令箭
lisheng 禮生
Liu Gou 劉狗
loujinding 鏤金頂
louyinding 鏤銀頂
lü 律
Lu Dengtai 盧登泰
Lü Rongxi 呂榮錫
lufu zouzhe 錄副奏摺
lüli (career record) 履歷
lüli (statutes and substatutes) 律例
Luo Dasheng 羅大聲
Luo Fenpeng 羅奮鵬
Luo Zhengxiu 駱正修
luzhao 路照
Ma Chaozhu 馬朝柱
Manwen zhengzi 滿文正字
maojuan 冒捐
maotouzhi 毛頭紙
maozhi 冒支
Men Shilong 門士龍
Meng Guangzu 孟光祖
Meng Yide 孟懿德
miaomo 描摸(摹)
min 民
mingluo tiaokuan 鳴鑼條款
mingqi 名器
mingzhi 明知
minren 民人
minzhuang 民壯
mipiao 米票
Mo Wenren 莫問仁
najian 納監
Nanhe tongzhi 南河同知
nanjue 男爵
Neige daku dang'an 內閣大庫檔案
Neige tiben 內閣題本
Ni buken yong wo, liao ni zhe guangou ye zuobucheng

你不肯用我,料你這管勾也做不成
Nishan 尼山
nongguan 農官
nongtong 弄童
pai 牌
paipiao 牌票
paishi 牌式
panfei 盤費
piaoshi 票式
pingzha 憑劄
pixiao 皮硝
pu 鋪
qian 錢
qianji 鈐記
qianpiao 簽票
qianzong 千總
qiben 契本
qibin 耆賓
qiche yougong 起車有功
qilao 耆老
Qinci zhou sima 欽賜州司馬
qingjinshi 青金石
qingqiu 請賕
Qingwen zhuanshu 清文篆書
qingyi (dark clothing) 青衣
qingyi (sentiment and righteousness) 情義
qingzhong 輕重
Qintian Jian 欽天監
qinwang 親王
qita 其他
qu xin 取信
Quan Jihua 全繼華
quanwei 權威
Rao Yuan 饒元
ren 人
run 閏
Ruo you cishi jidang yi shenming bao zhi
若有此事即當以身命保之
Rushi 儒士

sanyi 散役
Shang 上
Shanghua 尚華
shangyao tianting 上邀天聽
shanhu ding 珊瑚頂
shao dai wenshu 稍帶文書
Shen Lan 沈瀾
Shen Zhiqi 沈之奇
Shen Zhouqi 沈周奇
shengyuan 生員
shenjia qingbai ce 身家清白冊
sheren 舍人
shi 士
Shi E 十惡
Shi Lü 施屢
shi shu mu wu faji 實屬目無法紀
shiliang 食量
shishou 實收
shixing 實行
shiyong 試用
shou 首
Shou Lunyuan 壽掄元
shou ta xinku 受他辛苦
shouren 熟人
shuansuo 拴鎖
shuayin 刷印
Shuihuo 水火
shuijingding 水晶頂
shuling 薯苓
shuoqi pinqiong 說起貧窮
si 司
Si Heshang 四和尚
sisheng 祀生
Sishi Xue 四氏學
Siyi Guan 四譯館
su xi kezi 素習刻字
sui 歲
sujinding 素金頂
Taixue 太學

tan 攤
tangbao 塘報
tanwu 貪污
Tao Runwen 陶潤文
tianwen sheng 天文生
tiaoji 條記
tiben 題本
tiseng 替僧
titang 提塘
Tong banchao 佟半朝
Tong Guorang 佟國勷
Tong Guozuo 佟國佐
Tong Rude 童汝德
tongguan 通關
tongyang dadao 通洋大盜
touyi 頭役
tuji 圖記
Udasan 吳達善
waiwei 外委
wanfa 玩法
Wang Anlan 王安瀾
Wang Baoshan 王保山
Wang Chaosheng 王朝陞
Wang Keren 王克仁
Wang Minnan 王民難
Wang Nianxiu 王念修
Wang Wenjun 王文俊
Wang Yue 汪悅
Wang Zengcai 王曾才
Wang Zuo 王佐
wangzhang minming 王章民命
Wanyun 萬雲
weijin 違禁
weiju dao guan 畏懼到官
weilei 畏累
weipai 委牌
weizao 偽造
wen 文
wenping 文憑
Wu Fengyi 吳鳳儀

Wu Fuyun 武伏云
wu jinshi 武進士
Wujing Boshi 五經博士
wuliang 誤良
wusheng 舞生
wutuo daijuan bei pian 誤託代捐被騙
wuzhi bei pian 無知被騙
xi 璽
Xia Yinglong 夏應龍
xiancheng 縣丞
xiang 想
xiangli guangrong 鄉里光榮
xiangyinjiu 鄉飲酒
xiangyu 鄉愚
xiangyue 鄉約
xianxing changli 現行常例
xiaopiao 小票
xin 信
Xin jing 心經
xing 行
Xing Huozi 邢鈲子
Xingbu 刑部
xingfa 刑罰
Xingke tiben 刑科題本
xinpai 信牌
xinpiao 信票
xinwu 信物
xiqian 喜錢
Xu Dan 徐旦
Xu Rong 徐容
xuandan 選單
xuelu 學錄
xuncha difang 巡查地方
xundi 汛地
xunjian 巡檢
xuxian 虛銜
yamen 衙門
Yang Tingyi 楊廷一
yanglian yin 養廉銀

Yansheng Gongfu 衍聖公府
Yao Er 姚二
yao ge xu timian 要個虛體面
yao jiale 要夾了
Yao Weijun 姚維鈞
yeshi 野史
yi 驛
yi pifu er shan tianzi zhi quan 以匹夫而擅天子之權
yi shu dang'e 亦屬黨惡
yin 印
yingbu 應捕
yinhao 銀號
yinji 印記
yinjie 印結
yinjin 引進
yinse 印色
yinxin 印信
yiren 夷人
yishi gaogui 一時高貴
yizi 義子
yizi sheng 譯字生
you suo qiuwei 有所求為
youhui 油灰
yu 欲
Yu Laifeng 俞來鳳
yuanpu liangmin 愿樸良民
yuesheng 樂生
yutie 諭帖
zafan 雜犯
zanlisheng 贊禮生
zao er weicheng 造而未成
Zaoban Chu 造辦處
zazhi 雜職
zei 賊
zha 詐
zhafu 劄付
Zhalü 詐律
zhan lijue 斬立決
Zhang Dexian 張得賢

Zhang Junchun 張君純
Zhang Shu 張書
zhanxing shili 暫行事例
Zhao Dean 趙德安
Zhao Rudong 趙汝棟
Zhaqi 詐欺
Zhawei 詐偽
Zhawei 詐為
Zhinan 指南
zhishu you wei 制書有違
zhixian 職銜
zhizhao 執照
Zhong Jieyuan 鐘杰元
Zhong Xiaoni 鐘肖尼
Zhong Xigong 鐘錫公
Zhong You 仲由
zhongshu 中書
Zhongyong ciji 忠勇賜吉
Zhou Gong Miao 周公廟
Zhou Shikai 周士楷
zhoutong 州同
zhu jing 駐京
Zhu Sheng 祝昇
Zhu Shifa 朱世法
Zhu Yazhao 朱亞兆
zhudan 硃單
zhuipai 追牌
zhupi zouzhe 硃批奏折
Zhuyin Ju 鑄印局
zi you xue ke tuzhang 自幼學刻圖章
zidi 子弟
ziqi 自緝
zongshi 宗室
zouzhe 奏摺

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wei (false; counterfeit)
Wei code
Weijin (Violations of Prohibitions)
weipai (order)
weizao (forgery)
wen (characters)
wen (currency unit)
Wenjue, Buddhist master
wenping (certificate of appointment)
whips
women
wording: of forgeries
of *jiansheng* certificates
written imperial order
Wu, Silas
Wu Fengyi case
Wu Fuyun
Wu Jingzi
Wu Tan

Wu Yue
Wujing Boshi (Erudites of the Five Classics)
wusheng (dance performer)
wuzhi bei pian (ignorant and deceived)
Xia Yinglong
    and local officials
    and Meng Guangzu
    performance of
    and Shen Zhouqi. *See also* Fu Tianbao case
Xiamen (Amoy)
Xi'an general
xiancheng (county vice-magistrate)
xiangli guangrong ("local glory")
xiangyinjiu ("community drinking" ceremony)
xiangyu (bumpkins)
xiangyue (community compact)
xiangyue (rural district head)
xianxing changli (regular contributions)
xiaopiao (tickets)
Xie Tingwang
xin (belief; confidence)
Xing Huozi
Xingke (Punishments Office of Scrutiny)
Xinjiang
xinpai (warrant)
xinpiao (warrant)
xinwu ("objects of verification")
Xiong Shixian case
Xiong Yulong
xiqian (happiness money)
Xu Daling
Xu Dan
Xu Guozhu
Xu Rong
xuandan (selection record)
Xue Yunsheng
xuelu (instructor)
xundi (local military districts)
xunjian (police chief)
xunjing (patrolmen)
xuxian (brevet ranks)
yam
yamen underlings: contributions by
    former

perceptions of. *See also* clerks; runners
yamens
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Yang Tingyi
Yang Yulu
yanglian yin (“nourishing virtue silver”)
Yangzhou: good news scammer
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Luo Fenpeng in
Yangzi River
Yansheng Gongfu (Establishment of the Duke for Fulfilling the Sage)
Yao Er
Yao Weijun
yeshi (unofficial histories)
yin (seal)
Yin’e
yinhao (banking houses)
yinji (official seals)
yinjie (guarantee)
yinjin (“introductions”)
Yinli (Yunli)
Yinqi
Yinreng
yinse (ink color)
Yinsi
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Yintang
alleged letter for
and Hongxi case
and Huang Qirui case
purge of
Yinti (eldest prince)
Yinti (fourteenth prince)
Yinxiang
yinxin (official seal)
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vs. *guanfang* and *yinji*
Yinzhen. *See also* Yongzheng emperor
Yinzhi

Meng Guangzu's choice of
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role in the Meng Guangzu case
in the succession struggle
yiren ("barbarian")
yishi gaogui (respectable and wealthy overnight)
yizi (adoptive son)
yizi sheng (apprentice translator)
Yongcheng
yonggong (laborers)
Yongqi. *See also* Fifth Prince
Yongzheng emperor: and Buddhism
on counterfeiting
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Yongzheng period: phony missions
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you suo qiuwei ("sought something")
youhui (putty)
Yu Laifeng case
Yu Wenzhong
Yuan code
Yuan Delu
Yuan Institutions and Regulations
Yue Zhongqi
yuesheng (musician)
Yunlu (Yinlu)
yutie (notification)
zanlisheng (master of ceremony)
zao er weicheng ("formed but incomplete")
Zaoban Chu (Palace Workshop)
zazhi (subofficial functionaries)

zha (deception; to deceive)
zhafu (directive; authorizing certificate)
Zhalü (Deception statutes)
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Zhang, Lawrence
Zhang Dexian
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Zhang Pengfei
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Zhao Dean case
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Zhongshu Yuxi
Zhou Shikai
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    and “Shen Lan” case
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Zhu Yazhao
zhudan (vermilion document)
zhuipai (recall orders)
zidi (sons and brothers)
ziqi (victims pursuing the thieves)
zones of uncertainty
zongshi (imperial clansmen)
Zouhai
zouzhe (palace memorials)
Zuckmayer, Carl
Zuo Commentary